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A STUDY OF KNOWLEDGE IN EURIPIDES' HIPPOLYTUS

BY

C. A. E. LUSCHNIG

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To the students of Classics
at the University of Idaho, 1975-1984,
this work is effectionately dedicated

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C.A.E.L.
All Souls' Day, 1983
Kos, Dodecanese

Since 1983 I have made a number of revisions in the text and additions to the bibliography. Some of the more recent studies are not fully integrated into the body of my essay and for this I apologize.

Feast of Corpus Christi, 1986
Moscow, Idaho

FOREWORD

A QUESTION OF KNOWLEDGE

ξύνοιδε δ' οὔτις.

Hippolytus, 40

The subject of these six chapters is deliberately limited to the question of knowledge in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. They deal with how the characters know and with what is available for them to know, with the arrangement each character gives to the world and with the participation of the audience in the process of knowing. All these questions bear on the major critical issues of the play, causation, responsibility, and motivation, the nature and function of the goddesses, the dramatic focus, single or multiple. The approach has rendered valueless the condemnation of either Phaedra or Hippolytus and it is hoped that even Nurse is given the credit due her. Epistemology is not the subject of this work. Rather, the subject is what the *Hippolytus* has to say about knowing.

At times the remarks that follow may seem abstract. This must not be taken as implying a belief that the *Hippolytus* is a drama about abstract concepts. There are no abstractions in the play: there are people and situations. There is, on the other hand, talk about abstract concepts and it is in character. It is not my purpose to suggest that this is philosophy parading itself as drama, nor even philosophical drama. What philosophy is in the play is popular philosophy. Is too much being made here of the epistemological shortcomings of men and gods and not enough of the moral failings? Only if the connection between knowing and doing is overlooked. Phaedra does not overlook it. Nor does Hippolytus overlook the connection between knowing and being.

Is a concern with how we know and what we know too intellectual for a citizen audience? I think not. Is there a philosophical question that finds itself in folktale, legend, and myth more often than this one? If we know only what we see, we are in danger of overlooking a true prince beneath a reptilian skin or a wolf in sheep's clothing. If we believe what we hear we ignore the cry "no one is hurting me" and let the culprit get away. But if we rely on the predictability of human behavior, eventually the wolf will devour all our flocks. Sometimes knowing the story or the story pattern seduces us into faulty expectations. Perceptions change depending on the point of view of the perceiver: an elephant is more than its tail or leg or trunk. And a man is more than another's perception of him. But that is part of what he is.

Time is an aspect of knowing. Little by little, scene by scene we come to know what there is for us to know, while at the same time we know more than any of the actors on stage.

> κακοὺς δὲ θνητῶν ἐξέφην' ὅταν τύχῃ
> προθεὶς κάτοπτρον ὥστε παρθένῳ νέᾳ
> χρόνος· παρ' οἷσι μήποτ' ὀφθείην ἐγώ. (428-30)

Time's mirror requires a single viewer and it requires a vast number of viewers. Those viewers are the audience. The single viewer changes as the mirror is passed from hand to hand. The connection between seeing oneself and being seen is made intimately in Phaedra's suggestive image. Hippolytus, Phaedra, Theseus see themselves and what they see is good. When they must see themselves as others see them, what they see is evil. A man is more than his view of himself. But that too is part of what he is.

We cannot have all points of view at once. But literature allows us more than one. A tragedy involves all our faculties, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, for a limited time in a complete (that is, having a beginning, middle, and end) action. In the *Hippolytus*, Euripides causes our perceptions to focus and refocus. He draws us into participation in the epistemological questions of the drama, not as philosophers, but as the active subjects of philosophy.

οἳ πρῶτα μὲν βλέποντες
ἔβλεπον μάτην,
κλύοντες οὐκ ἤκουον ....

Aeschylus, *Prometheus*

CHAPTER ONE

THE FACE AND THE MASK, SEEING AND KNOWING

θεάσομαι δὲ σὺν πατρὸς μολὼν ποδὶ
πῶς νιν προσόψῃ καὶ σὺ καὶ
δέσποινα σή. (661-2)

There is probably too much evidence in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, too many inadequate witnesses[1], and too much talk about getting to the truth, talk which frustrates itself short of its goal. In the prologue Aphrodite announces her plan and promises to show the truth of her statements (9). The scenes between Nurse and Phaedra are focused on getting information. Phaedra fears the beams of the house as witnesses (418) and Hippolytus wishes the house would speak for him (1075). Theseus dreams of a world where men had two voices (928-31) and Hippolytus wishes he could be two people and bear witness for himself (1078-9). Time is an informer to Phaedra (430), Hippolytus (1051), Artemis

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An earlier version of part of this chapter has been published under the title, "Time's Mirror: A Reflection of Phaedra's Isolation and Self-Consciousness," in *Classical Texts and their Traditions: Studies in Honor of C. R. Trahman*, Scholars Press, 1984, 139-46.

[1] On the inadequacy of the witnesses in the *Hippolytus*, consider the following:

404, Phaedra wishes not to have many witnesses to her shameful deeds, a wish that does not come true: we all become witnesses (after her death) to her lie about Hippolytus. The shameful deed she is thinking about here (not a deed at all, but a potential disgrace) is to be memorialized in cult (1429-30, cf. 30-33).

972, Theseus refers to the corpse as a witness, but it is a silent witness, testifying to a lie, or to a truth reversed or wrongly interpreted.

1022, Hippolytus cries, "If only I had a witness like me!" But Hippolytus is sworn to secrecy and even if he were not or had a witness like himself, what he knows and could tell is not the whole truth. His tirade (cruel or naive) tells us what kind of witness he would make.

1075-6, Hippolytus wishes the house could speak and bear witness for him. Theseus mocks him for calling on mute witnesses.

977, Theseus fears that the monsters he defeated and killed and the places where they dwelt will not bear witness for him if he lets his son prevail over him, witnesses as silent in death and petrification as Phaedra's body (the witness he believes) and the palace (the witness he mocks his son for invoking).

286, Nurse is grateful for the chorus to witness her pains on behalf of her mistress. The chorus might be a good witness, being present to the whole action and being sympathetic, except that they are sworn to secrecy and lie about what they know (804-5). They would not be good witnesses for the defense for Nurse.

1451, Hippolytus, with one of his last breaths, calls upon Artemis to witness his oath. Artemis has already left.

The audience is taught its purpose by the play, as the participating witnesses, as the subjects, not the objects of epistemology.

(1322). The talk of evidence is often abstract (cf. Nurse 191-97, Theseus 925-31, 936-42) and ignores what is present.

The *Hippolytus* abounds in words referring to knowledge, thought, and sense perception, not only seeing and hearing, but even smelling (1391) and tasting (663).[2] Though taste may be the most direct, sight is, of course, the sense synonymous with living in Greek. The play opens with a reference to sight in that sense (line 4): those seeing the light of the sun are under Aphrodite's power. Her speech closes by sending us back to her introduction with the statement that Hippolytus does not know that he is looking for the last time on the light (57). Only in death, if even then (lines 32-3; 1425-7), will Hippolytus be free of Aphrodite's power. And the drama closes with the covering of Hippolytus' face (1456): no longer will he see or be seen. The two goddesses announce their departures in similar ways (Aphrodite, *eisorō* 51; Artemis, *horō* 1439); they leave because of what they see, Hippolytus coming, Hippolytus dying.

Seeing and being seen are necessary to Aphrodite's *modus operandi*. The chorus sings the first stasimon on Eros and eyes (525). We are told that Phaedra loved Hippolytus at sight (*idousa* 27) when he came to see and be initiated (*opsin* 25) and that she built a temple looking out toward Trozen (*katopsion* 30). The temple is a public monument to her private love that looks away from home.[3] Aphrodite, we may say, is the power of Phaedra's feelings: she is mighty and conspicuous in our world and she has brought the two together or, at least, she has used to her advantage their being thrown together.[4] The temple is a kind of wish or prayer, giving a grand and lasting scale to a private and—as it turns out to be—temporary feeling. But her love, coming as it does, from sight, lacks knowledge or intimacy. Knowledge comes, however, when the unspoken wish, the visible sign of which is the temple looking toward the place where Hippolytus lives, is fulfilled.[5] Knowledge of Hippolytus comes when she hears him damning her; and her love, overwhelmed by fear and loathing, ceases. The visual aspect of her love is made clear in her fantasy: it is a picture without words, only hunting calls and the sensuous sounds of nature breaking the silence.[6] In the picture she sees herself and

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[2] "I shall know your boldness, having tasted it!" This is a strong statement from Hippolytus, who thinks he has the most direct kind of evidence. Unlike the chorus, he hears from a third party but does not try to find out more directly.

[3] Barrett, 160-2, on the local significance.

[4] See Sale, esp. 41-4, on Aphrodite as the goddess who brings together (a function appropriate to the action described in the prologue).

[5] Knox (208) notes that in her delirium Phaedra "has for the first time put her desire into words." But she has already built the temple, putting her desire into a monument for all to *see*.

[6] See Glenn on the erotic significance of Phaedra's outcries.

is seen. Why is Phaedra so ashamed after her lyrical outcry that she feels she must hide her head? She has seen herself not acting disgracefully, but in a dangerous juxtaposition. Phaedra sees the picture in her fantasy in revealing detail and she sees herself in that picture. She sees her golden hair flowing (220); she sees her hand with the hunting spear in it (221-2). It is as if she were looking at herself in a mirror dressed for the hunt, seeing herself not as one sees oneself in reality, but as one is seen by another. But the scene of the first outcry (208-12) is not her boudoir, it is a leafy meadow (210-211), watered by pure streams (208-209): it is no other than the place Hippolytus has just left (cf. 73-4, 78), which is not the place where he hunts nor the place Aphrodite mentions in the prologue (17-18). Here we look back to the peace of his sacred meadow and of the chorus' washing place (compare 121 and 209; 127 and 208), but Phaedra, passively erotic (211), is an intrusion in either setting. Her second vision puts her further back into the prologue to the setting Aphrodite actually did mention, the green wood (17-18, cf. 215) and the hunt (52) with the dogs and prey. But her picture of herself with her flaxen hair is another intrusion, but this time reminding us of Hippolytus' address to Artemis when he offers himself and his gift (82). To be complete her picture requires a viewer. The viewer is Hippolytus, who also goes about with another unseen companion. The pines she mentions (216) will return at the end of the messenger's speech (1254), another place where we are painfully aware of the entanglement of Phaedra and Hippolytus. In her third outcry she looks back to Hippolytus' last lines in the prologue (110-112, cf. 229) and also to his last grim horse race, to his farewell to Artemis (1092) and to the very place within sight of which—though he has left it behind him—he will meet his end, tamed and broken by his horses (228, cf., Barrett ad loc.). In how many ways does Phaedra see herself in this painful and in some way liberating passage? She fantasizes a self as she wishes she could be, she describes herself as another would see her; she sees herself being seen by that other; and finally she sees clearly what her vision means in relation to the knowledge she alone holds. Here for those who remembered the first *Hippolytus* is a reverberation, so to speak, of the scene that shocked Hippolytus. But in the surviving play we see Phaedra veiled, in shame at the suggestion she has made to herself.

Sight is important to Aphrodite: the *pragma* will be brought into the light (42); the whole play is her display (cf. *deixō* 9, 42). To Hippolytus, who does not like to look (cf. 1005-6), sound is more important. He enters singing. His only direct reference to seeing is negative (*omma d'ouch to son* 86, that is, he does not see her seeing him). He ignores the evidence of

sight, an exclusion which makes him not wholly alive.[7] He cannot avoid seeing the statue of Aphrodite but he ignores it. His tools are words, prayers, hymn, oath, denunciation, the argument from probability.[8]

His servant follows suit, when he asks Aphrodite to pretend not to *hear* (119). Their conversation is more about speaking and hearing (86, 95, 99, 116, 119) than about seeing (but compare Aphrodite's *ouk anōnumos*, 1 to the servant's *kapisēmos* 103). Hippolytus' rejection of Aphrodite is connected with the underdevelopment of his visual sensibility. We will return later to his aural relationship with Artemis. We may note already that Phaedra's knowledge of Hippolytus is as incomplete as his knowledge of Artemis. The prologue introduces in tandem the senses of seeing and hearing, the interconnectedness of which, along with their relationship to knowing, will be a theme in the play.

The chorus enters, telling what they know and what they still need to know. They are careful to give the whole story, making their entrance seem natural. The existence of a third party from whom they have heard the news, the anonymous *phila tis* (125), and perhaps of a source further back implied (someone from the palace) is an interesting variation on the 'witness theme' so apparent in the play (seeing oneself being seen by another whether named or not). There is little said about sight in the parodos, more on hearing (130, 135, 158). The fact that they have only heard from another is the cause of their coming: much is still concealed (cf. 131-4, 138-9, 153-4); their knowledge is incomplete (130, 135, 158). At 170-175 the chorus comments on the appearance of Phaedra, but what lies behind the mask is still hidden: it is this that they long to know. The parodos and the scene that follows give a careful account of the progress of knowledge: hearsay which leads to conjecture (as displayed in the chorus' series of questions based on probability), followed by confirmation of what they have heard by the appearance of the queen; but the two together are not enough; complete knowledge can be gained only by the third step, cross-examination.[9] The comparison of our knowledge to theirs at this point is interesting. Through divine revelation the audience knows what the chorus knows through hearsay, that Phaedra is sick. This fact is confirmed for both chorus and audience by her appearance. But we already know what the chorus has come to find out, what is the cause of her illness, and we know that they will get nothing out of Nurse (cf. 40). But what we know is impersonal, a passion imposed by the god from the outside; our knowledge is less real than the chorus', for they at least

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[7] See Sale, 44-56 on Hippolytus' exclusions.

[8] See Finley, 8, 18 on the argument from *eikos* beginning at line 1008.

[9] That is, *elenchos*: lines 271, 298, 930, 944, 1056, 1310, 1322, 1337.

have heard the rumor from a friend. What is behind the mask we and the chorus learn together.

Nurse knows little and she carefully tells us all of it. Sight and sound are mingled in her words, along with complaint about lack of knowledge (192-7). Her querulousness is curious for she complains about ignorance of things we cannot know by experience (the mystery of the world beyond). And yet we know that she values experience highly (252). We cannot know another life, but we can, according to Nurse, know this one. Her uneasiness about the unknown is balanced by her certainty about what is important in this life. This certainty is made possible by Nurse's intellectual limitations. Long life has taught Nurse what to expect, but for her there are only a limited number of possibilities. She is therefore both able to predict Phaedra's behavior (182-5 and cf. her questions based on the probability of the recurrence of events she has known or at least heard of, 316, 318, 320) and able to be surprised. Nurse fears the unknown and desires to protect herself with knowledge. Perhaps the clearest indication of Nurse's lack of imagination is her total ignorance of the possibility of a kind of knowledge that can hurt (330, 332, cf. 327). She finds out soon enough (353vv.). Phaedra on the other hand fears the known, and is made, because of the pain of her knowledge to wish to hide from sight (243, 245, 250) and even to wish not to know (249) although she knows it is too late for that. In this scene then the references to seeing are negative. "We see," the chorus says (268), "but we do not understand (cf. 269); we want to learn and to hear" (270). They want to know things complete (cf. *archē* 272).

Oral and visual are integrated throughout this movement, with their opposites, keeping silent and hiding.[10] Finally Nurse says *phthenxai ti deur' athrēson* (300). Combined with her touch (333-4, cf. 310), the sight and sound of Nurse are too much for Phaedra. *Exephēnas es phaos kaka* (368; cf. 362, 371).

Witnesses are very much on Phaedra's mind, not only in the great speech, but throughout. The women of Trozen, Nurse, Hippolytus, all are witnesses to her passion, as well as the anonymous witnesses by whom she fears to be seen (321, 403-4, 428-430). Her effort has been both to keep silent and to hide (394) and she first failed at the latter. Her

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[10] See lines 172, 192-7, 243, 245, 250, 268, 269, 270, 273, 279, 280, 284, 297, 300, 312, 321, 332, 336, 344, 346, 352, 355, 368, 386, 394, 403-4, 414, 416, 417, 428-30, 451, 463, 466, 479, 518. See Reckford, 314-5 on Phaedra's "fascination with becoming the kind of woman she is denouncing" and "playing instinctively with the idea of sinning and not being caught." Phaedra's role is one of many ambiguities in the tragedy. She is both wicked and good, both noble and infamous, now one, now the other. And in these intimate remarks she is both at once.

nosos has become visible; for all her efforts to hide her face (244-5, 250) the chorus can see that something is wrong (280 and cf. 202 where Phaedra uncovers her head). Her speech is full of hiding, darkness, secrecy (*nuktos* 375, *kruptein* 394, *lanthanein* 403, *lathra(i)* 414, *skoton* 417), with the darkness itself finally becoming a witness (417).

Phaedra's image of Time's mirror (428-30) brings out the complexity and visual nature of her thinking (cf. also 379, 392, 416). The imaginary *parthenos* is the subject looking at herself, seeing herself as an object. She is surrounded by Time revealing her as an object to anonymous others. In the last line Phaedra substitutes herself for the unnamed ingenue as both subject and object. May I not be seen is virtually the equivalent of may I not be.[11] Earlier she had asked "how can they look into their husbands' faces?" To look into the face of another, at least for Phaedra, is to see the other seeing oneself. It combines the same subject-object-subject complexity as occurs in the image of Time's mirror and in Phaedra's fantasy.[12] Phaedra could not bear to face her wickedness in her reflection, nor could she bear for others to see it in the reflection held up by Time. The mirror is inherently other-revealing[13] in that it shows the self as an object, the self as one will present it to others. The *parthenos nea* (of 429) cannot be Phaedra, but it is the self of her imagination, the self who could ride and hunt with Hippolytus as innocently as the maidens who will cut their hair in mourning for him (1425-7). The mirror held up by Time, proverbially the bringer of truth to light, reveals the wickedness of the person reflected in it. She does not mention goodness. We might infer it, were it not for the negative tone of the speech. By the time of Hippolytus' understandable, but unkind, denunciation, Phaedra's fear of witnesses has become a reality. His view of her forces her to put herself into the group of women with ruined reputations (668-9) among whom she so feared to be seen. It is, we may note, the false reputation for wrong-doing which Phaedra makes Hippolytus share (730-731) and this is the illness of which she speaks (730).

Other characters share, though to a lesser degree, Phaedra's self-absorption. Theseus too sees himself being seen.[14] Immediately after his entrance he is seen seeing himself as not being received as etiquette

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[11] Cf. Dover, 226, 220 n3 and Avery, 25-35.

[12] To this complexity Italo Calvino adds a fourth party, "He was staring hard, not at his wife and me, but at his daughter watching us.... He saw that I was seeing." (*If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, Torino, 1979, translated by William Weaver, New York, 1981, 208.)

[13] Barrett, 237-8.

[14] Knox, 221-2, on Theseus' self-consciousness as a man in the public eye; Smoot comments in some detail on the narcissism of Hippolytus; it is my hope to show that all the named characters share a similar trait.

demands (792). When he has heard the news of his loss, he sees himself almost as a stage-figure wearing the wrong costume, dressed as a *theoros* with a crown on his head, when his role now is that of bereaved widower. The throwing off of the garland is a self-conscious act, reminiscent of his son's first act of self-assertion in handing a wreath to Artemis (73) and of his wife's throwing off of her headdress (201-2). He speaks of witnesses as if they alone give reality to his past deeds (975-980). Hippolytus too is accustomed to picture himself; he sees himself as the one virtuous man in a world of *kakoi*. He has created for himself an isolated and changeless world away from the pollution of corruptible men and women. When this world is broken into he is forced to consider how he is being seen by others.[15] Finally (1078-9) he wishes he could stand opposite himself and look at himself and weep for himself, displaying the same subject-object-subject confusion as Phaedra does in her image of Time's mirror.[16] And his father's retort, that his son is much practiced in *sauton sebein* (1080), is Theseus' most perceptive statement.

Nurse understands Phaedra's fear of witnesses all too well. She tries to rob it of validity: one can see and pretend not to see (463; cf. 466). Nurse knows what she is talking about. She is a fascinating combination of moral flexibility (approaching slovenliness) and candid awareness of the ways of the world (cf. Phaedra's wish not to have many witnesses to ugly deeds, 404). Though of limited imagination she has paid some attention to her experience in life. If Nurse's view is correct, if it is possible to see and yet seem not to see what one has seen, to not know what one knows, then Phaedra's moral universe crumbles. Nurse offers an intriguing (if offensive) variation on the witness theme by suggesting the possibility of the annihilation or at least denial of the consequences of seeing and being seen. We are reminded of the servant's request to Kupris (119), "seem not to hear." But Phaedra does not believe that knowledge can be without consequence. It does not enter her mind that Hippolytus can seem not to know what he has heard (604, 689-690). He will, as he himself has threatened, watch (661 *theasomai*) Phaedra seeing Theseus seeing her (662). The witness theme has become more complicated by the presence of a third party seeing both Phaedra and Theseus as objects seeing each other. Hippolytus of course has found out what he believes he knows, not by seeing but by hearing. He has not asked questions, but believed what he heard because it confirms his long held opinion. He is therefore a worse witness than the chorus who had gone through the steps

[15] Hippolytus, because he must see himself from others' points of view, actually uses the word *kakos* of himself five times (654, 1031, 1071, 1075, 1191); see below, chapter three.

[16] Barrett, "this rather odd wish," 363.

of finding our (hearsay, sight, cross-examination and all with the sympathy needed to learn the truth). Hippolytus is a witness equal to his father.

Hippolytus, like Phaedra, believes in the consequences of knowledge, though he does not fully realize them until much later. One thing he does not notice is that when he is shouting his denunciation he is being seen and heard by Phaedra. What he says is becoming part of her knowledge. He feels polluted by what he has heard, so much so that he childishly, priggishly, feels the need to wash out his ears. As if he could wash away the knowledge of evil. As if he could annihilate what he knows. As if his ears (like his tongue 612) were separable from himself. But by the end of the speech, his promise to watch Phaedra and her Nurse shows a return to the ordinary moral attitude toward consequences.

Sight and sound, so important to the witness theme, are becoming more and more blended. Phaedra asks the chorus (712) *sigē(i) kaluptein hanthad' eisēkousate.* To which they swear *mēden ... es phaos deixein* (cf. Phaedra's song on concealment and appearance 672, 673, 674, 677). The two become more confused at Theseus' arrival. He hears a cry from the house (790-1) and begins to question the chorus. Reference to sight then becomes prominent (*hōs idō* 825, *eisorō* 822, *hora(i)* 849, *idō* 865, *eidon* 879; *eisorō* 873, chorus). But the letter howls (*boa(i), boa(i)* 877). Writing combines both; a letter does speak. At 879-80 Theseus speaks of seeing the sound in the writing. Elsewhere Phaedra fears the sound of darkness (417-18) and opposes *lathra(i)* to *logois* (413-414). Theseus wishes for *dissas phōnas* (928), but much of the talk in the scene between father and son is of seeing, perhaps because of the silent but visible nature of the evidence (evidence more powerful than that which Hippolytus has but cannot use, cf. 1062; cf. the emphasis on seeing which the chorus continues 1106, 1115, 1120, 1123, 1124 *bis*, 1251).[17]

Theseus and his son see and hear, Hippolytus, perhaps for the first time ever, noticing Phaedra, now that she is dead and can no longer see him. But neither knows the truth that glistens beneath the surface. The failing in both men is made apparent by the contrast between their unexamined assumptions and the statements made by the messenger, whose speech mixes sights and sounds in a medley matching the chaos of the scene he is describing. All the themes of seeing and hearing, hiding and silence are brought into play in his speech.[18] Of course a messenger is always a witness, even when he lies or stretches the truth, as this one does

[17] Sounds: 902, 904, 911, 912, 924, 928, 991, 1075, 1076; sights: 905, 907-8, 915, 943, 945-6, 971, 993, 1005 (*bis*), 1009-10, 1023, 1024, 1071, 1078, 1097. Cf. Knox *passim*.

[18] Sounds: 1201-2, 1205, 1215, 1216, 1241; sights: 1206, 1207-8, 1216, 1217, 1228; silence: 1231; hiding: 1208, 1209, 1247. Cf. Knox, 229 n16.

not. For this messenger is most attentive to leave his message at what he has seen and heard (*ou katoid', bis* 1245, 1248). But he also realizes that knowing goes beyond seeing and hearing. As for the other evidence of Phaedra's letter and the evidence Theseus infers from the outcome (1267), these are nothing compared to his knowledge of the man (cf. 1251). The man knows his master, knows him to be *esthlos* (1254)[19] and nothing can obliterate that knowledge. This statement by the messenger, the coda to his speech, a personal observation beyond the scope of his message, is as much an indictment of Theseus as anything said in the play. Theseus does not know his son.[20]

The messenger, with the words, *epei nin esthlon ont' epistamai* (1254), has introduced a kind of knowledge that now becomes conspicuous by its absence from the rest of the play. The other characters have no knowledge of each other except as objects, whether of desire, service, loathing, hatred, fear, persuasion. Although all see themselves as moral agents,[21] none sees the others as acting on their own for the good. None can understand the actions of the others except by their consequences to himself or herself. They interpret what they see and hear from an 'only I' point of view. To Phaedra, Hippolytus is the silent object of her desire, until she hears him speak. Then he becomes the object of her fear. She does not know him well enough to know that he would never knowingly break his oath, but acts only on her own fear of what he knows. Nurse, though she has had ample opportunity to know her mistress, in fact knows her only as the object of her service and therefore the reason for her own existence. Her own life depends on the preservation of her mistress. Her knowledge of Hippolytus is, if possible, even slighter: he is nothing but an object, first as a name to use to persuade her mistress that she is in danger of having her children's place usurped and then as an instrument in her plan to save the queen. Theseus is only a relationship to all of them, barely mentioned otherwise. Theseus claims to love his wife and yet he says nothing about her that could not be better said of Alcestis or any wife but Phaedra.[22] As far as his son is concerned, Theseus makes up traits for him and mocks him with them, while fixing him in that alien category of young men. And finally Hippolytus sees Phaedra and Nurse only as agents of evil and his father as an audience before whom he must maintain his inability to speak in public. Never in his defense does he notice his father's grief and loss. And when these characters speak of other people in general (as Hippolytus speaks of *kakoi*

[19] Dover, 194.
[20] Sale, 65-6.
[21] Dover, 279.
[22] Sale, 65ff.

and Phaedra of other women, Theseus of the future generations, Nurse of gods and men in love) it is to attribute to them moral failure. Even in Phaedra's great speech, as positive as she is about her own intellect, she does not mention the possibility of mortal life attaining moral success. But Hippolytus does make progress in seeing others as moral agents. He is forced to consider Phaedra, probably for the first time, and to wonder why she killed herself (1034-5). He begins to focus on his father's position and to put himself in his father's place (1041-4). And at last in his deathbed recognition he realizes the power of passion (1413) and the depth of another's suffering (1405, 1407, 1409).

In the epilogue, Artemis, like her counterpart in the prologue, stresses seeing and being seen and bringing to light. The emphasis on sight and light is of course made more obvious by the contrast with the darkness of death. The gates of Hades are the last things Hippolytus sees before his eyes are covered in death, sending us back to Aphrodite's prophecy. All has been made clear; all is brought to light.[23] Theseus was convinced of what was *aphanē* (1289) but his *atē* is *phanera*. It is recommended that he hide himself in the dark places of the earth (1290). Artemis (like Aphrodite) has come to show forth (1298, cf. 9, 42) not the same aspect of Hippolytus that Aphrodite came to show but the opposite. Or rather, the aspect of Hippolytus as subject for which Aphrodite hated him is the same as that for which Artemis loved him. But both see him as object and themselves as the subject judging him: to one he is *dikaios* (1307, cf. 1299), *eusebēs* (1309), and *sōphrōn* (cf. 1402); to the other he is *mega phronōn* (cf. 6) and by implication impious (21 and cf. 1402). We have seen Hippolytus in both attitudes, but each goddess sees him only as he is to her. Theseus *appears* evil to Artemis and Poseidon (1320). He is reproached for not undertaking a *skepsis* (1323, and later allowed the excuse that Phaedra had by her death taken away the *logōn elenchous* 1336-7).

Hippolytus is escorted on. He calls upon Zeus, "do you see?" (1363). He perceives the presence of Artemis through her voice and her scent (1391-2). Clearly he does not see her, for otherwise he would not need to ask, "do you see me?" (1395). Yes, she sees him (1396) but cannot weep. All she can do is promise revenge and honors. Phaedra's love will not be hushed nor nameless (1429-30). And then she sees (1439) that death is near and so departs. Darkness comes over Hippolytus' eyes (1444); he sees the gates of the dead (1447) and cries with his dying breath, "cover my face at once with my robe" (1458). "Cover my head again ... cover it," Phaedra had cried too (243, 245) so that she might not see or be seen, for she feared what her face might reveal.

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[23] Knox, 226-7 on lexical correspondence between Artemis and Aphrodite.

What the face reveals is at the heart of the question of seeing and knowing.

Aphrodite tells us that Hippolytus has "fallen into a relationship that is too great for a mortal" (19). But does it not turn out to be less than human too? Not all of Hippolytus' senses are involved: he hears Artemis' voice, but does not see her face (86). Even at his life's end apparently he still does not see her. And she cannot be present at his death. Similarly Aphrodite departs when she sees him coming.

Hippolytus does not use all his faculties. The senses can deceive us, but it is through them that we learn about the phenomenal world. Not only is Hippolytus unable to see his goddess, but he has trouble seeing his fellow mortals. His second scene transfers his rejection of Aphrodite to the human level when he denounces all women and Phaedra with them. Hippolytus has heard Nurse's proposition, but he has neglected the other evidence, in particular the evidence of his eyes. Phaedra has been quite visibly ill, but Hippolytus has noticed nothing. We know this because it has been pointed out to us. When the chorus is questioning Nurse about Phaedra's illness, they express surprise that her husband is satisfied with her condition. Nurse replies that Phaedra hides her suffering and does not admit that she is sick, to which the chorus exclaims,

ὁ δ' ἐς πρόσωπον οὐ τεκμαίρεται βλέπων; (280).

"No," answers Nurse, "he is out of town," giving us the necessary fact. But the chorus' question subtly gives us an even more important piece of information (which might not be apparent to a back-row spectator): Phaedra's suffering shows clearly on her face. It is there as a *tekmērion*. Hippolytus could draw a conclusion from it, but he fails to do so.

Hippolytus bases his conclusion only on what he has heard. But he is aware enough of Phaedra's presence in Trozen to say "what is this, your wife dead, I just now left her" (905-7) and aware enough to note that she did not surpass all women in beauty (1009-1010). Phaedra is an object to him. He does not notice human pain or passion until much later.

In that chilling scene between father and son, we are made aware once again of Hippolytus' failure to look people in the face. Theseus commands,

δεῖξον δ' ... τὸ σὸν πρόσωπον δεῦρ' ἐναντίον πατρί (946—7).

Hippolytus must be looking at the ground in shame and horror, not able to look into his father's face, not able to grasp the profundity of his father's grief and anger. This is made more clear in his speech to his father when he proposes as coming from his father several arguments and an answer to each. What he does not mention is uncontrolled passion with no ulterior motive, which his father has already attributed to him.

Hippolytus uses reason, employing that most logical of all arguments, the argument from probability, but in vain. He does not know that *logos* can also be used to manipulate the emotions.

Hippolytus' inability to see the emotional side of his fellow human beings is connected, at the level of sense perception, with his association with Artemis whom he cannot see and who cannot shed a tear for him or see him either in his most essentially mortal act. He even misunderstands his relationship with Artemis; to give him credit, how was he to know that his beloved goddess would stand by and let him be destroyed? But his own isolated way of life, his own creation of an immutable existence, is very like the policy of the gods. He too stands apart; he separates humanity into two groups, himself (the sole companion of Artemis) with a few unnamed virtuous men and the *kakoi*. Hippolytus, like Plato, has chosen, with his pure meadow, a substitute for the phenomenal world. But in the end it fails him. He was able neither to completely exclude nor to deal with the world as it is.[24]

How much does the face show? How good is the evidence of the eyes? Phaedra, when she is denouncing women who commit unsavory deeds in secret, asks (414), "how do they look their husbands in the face?" She knows she could not. She would fear even the inanimate roof-beams (418; cf. 519). Later in one of his echoes of Phaedra's words, Hippolytus promises that he will watch how Nurse and Phaedra will look into the face of Theseus (*prosopsē(i)* 662) when he comes back. Both Phaedra and Hippolytus believe that one can see guilt on the face, because the one being seen will show his or her guilt. Does it follow that on the face of the falsely accused innocence can be seen? They do not say so. Nor does Hippolytus test his theory. He does not look at Phaedra; he is deprived of seeing Phaedra and Theseus seeing each other. Phaedra's actions imply that innocence will not be as visible as guilt, especially in the face of other, incontrovertible evidence. Theseus too believes that the face is a *tekmērion* (946). He reiterates this belief after the 'accident' when he says,

> ὡς ἰδὼν ἐν ὄμμασιν
> τὸν τἄμ' ἀπαρνηθέντα μὴ χρᾶναι λέχη
> λόγοις τ' ἐλέγξω δαιμόνων τε συμφοραῖς. (1265-7)

Theseus believes that here he has additional proof of his son's guilt. But we know, with the messenger, that Hippolytus is *esthlos*. And we know that there is more to it than that. For we have seen him fail his most important

[24] Sale, 44-56.

moral test. We have seen him with his own eyes in the prologue, but we have had to judge him in Phaedra's eyes and in his father's.

κρύψον δέ μου πρόσωπον . . . (1458)

He shares this action passively with Phaedra (243). We have to remember her scenes while we see his last. And neither is a scene of peace, but of exhaustion. Both have suffered wrong in the eyes of men; both have served as battlegrounds for Artemis and Aphrodite; both died to preserve their innocence. But Time's mirror has shown both of them up as also guilty. For time has taught them both that seeing and being seen are two sides of the same action.

Hide my face, now.... If we have been thinking of and expecting the veiled Hippolytus, at the last he returns.

εἷς ἀνὴρ οὐδεὶς ἀνήρ

Greek Proverb

CHAPTER TWO

OTHER WORLDS

Μύθοις δ' ἄλλως
φερόμεσθα (197)

Nurse is speaking, though unable to get her thoughts into clear focus, of whatever it is that holds us to this life and of the impossibility of knowing another (lines 191-197). It is an affirmation of life[1] to be sure, but she ends on a negative note: tales of the other world attract us too. Such tales, fantasies, visions of other worlds, the play shows, can change the world shared by all. Each character's fantasies call into being an isolated, lonely existence; each orders the world more or less creatively. But each fails to come to terms with others' imaginative orderings.

Not only do characters in the *Hippolytus* live in worlds of their own creation, in defiance of the world they know, but they try and sometimes manage to impose their fabrications on the lives of others, to break into others' closed worlds. The world as it seems to the characters is imperfect, but its manifestations suggest other, better worlds, built in love or anger, built of dreams or disappointments. These longings for better realities, ideal spaces, are both creative and destructive. The desire for perfection and the belief that it can be achieved lead the men and women to destroy one another.

Hippolytus most clearly lives in a world at variance with the world known by the other characters in the play. He is successful, the most successful character in the play, in creating a totally perfect world for himself. First, of course, he has his meadow, untouched by the world of ordinary people, untouched by change. The bee in spring traverses the meadow. Change and the passing of time do not corrupt it. In its immutability, Hippolytus prays to be like it always. It is a place of beauty and perfection, created in opposition to the world we know and to the world he knows exists where there can be no evil (*tois kakoisi d'ou themis*, 81).

But there are problems which Hippolytus does not see. Although he manages to spend part of his life in his perfect world, there is another in which he is not living in accordance with others' expectations of him, with in fact both divine and human expectations and demands.

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[1] Barrett, 196ff.

In the first place, the servant points out that Hippolytus is not paying the gods their due, an important matter, considering the value Hippolytus places on his own piety (83, 656, 996, 1061, 1364, 1368). We know, from Aphrodite's words, that the servant's theology is correct: men are expected to honor all the gods. For all his claim to chastity, the young man is heard putting the worst interpretation on Aphrodite's function (106).[2] Even his own virtue exists only in his separate world with Artemis: Aphrodite sees him as impious and we see him as, at best, mistaken in his relations (or lack thereof) with both Aphrodite and Phaedra. It has been said often enough that Hippolytus is incomplete, but there is one place—he thinks of it as a place—in which he is all he ought to be. Granted it is too small a world and its standards cannot without disastrous results be extended beyond itself.

Hippolytus is also inept at the give and take of dialogue. Although he says that he will take good advice, he does not (89-90). He shrugs off his attendant's words and changes the subject: what he is doing here is moving away from the world of himself in relation to others back to his own private world. He will fail ultimately because, however perfect his creation, there are other people who can break into the closed, private world of his (limited) imagination. To be perfect and at the same time a social animal is a near impossibility. But what is Hippolytus doing other than what everyone (in the play) does, trying to understand the greater world through his experience in his own confined setting?

Nurse expects Hippolytus to have dynastic ambitions (308-310), and manages to put the thought into Phaedra's mind. But his world does not allow him to entertain notions of this kind. That within the political setting he really ought to have some ambition is seconded by his response to what he believes ought to be Theseus' argument (1013 vv.).[3] Hip-

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[2] Sale, 55ff.

[3] Is it significant that Theseus does not himself suggest this motive? His speech is of the emotional type (not unlike his son's first long speech) in which he strings together various half-connected and irrational attacks (Orphism, vegetarianism, religious hypocrisy). Essentially, he accuses Hippolytus of having carnal lusts (like any man) and of trying to cloak them and so deceive his associates through his facade of sanctimony. Hippolytus is unable to deal with this charge, except to insist on his own virginity, making his father all the more certain that his own conclusions are correct. Because the son is so free of sexual desire, he must invent ulterior motives. What he tries to do in his speech is to look at the present circumstances from his father's point of view (possibly a first for Hippolytus). The political argument, under normal circumstances, would be a good one: throughout Theseus is presented as a political man. But this is not the normal Theseus and Hippolytus' deficiency (or lack of experience) leads him to underestimate the motive of uncontrolled passion which his father imputes to him. A rational argument will not work any more than a tirade worked with Phaedra. Would anything have worked? Probably not. On the other hand, this speech is a particularly important indication of Hippolytus' development. For not only is he trying to look at events with his

polytus disavows any part of the competitive spirit, except in sports, once again confirming the closed nature of his world.[4]

Although Hippolytus' world is not a figment of his imagination, his attempt to live in it in the midst of palace life is where his creativity fails him.[5] He has left the meadow before the play opens (although, it is true he comes from the hunt, the garland for Artemis has been culled from the *akēratos leimōn*). He never returns. We see him only in the real world, the world shared by others, a world where the distinction between *hoi kakoi* and *hoi sōphrones* is not so clear cut. In the play we see how his ideal world affects his actions in society, how his private world colors his view of the outside world and causes him to have fantasies about it, and finally how the irruption of the social world forces him to examine his own life and to find it inadequate. For is not part of the tragedy the destruction of his and others' visions? When he is gone, gone with him is a way of being in the world.

In his long speech of outrage, Hippolytus fantasizes a world without women, for him, a utopian world.[6] His fantasy of this other world is threefold. First there should be no women, no sexual intercourse at all. This corresponds to his private existence where sex plays no part, and is a first attempt to extend it to the world at large: earlier he had—though with disapproval (106)—allowed for different views (104). What is particularly strange and un-Greek is the attitude to continuation. "If you," he says, addressing Zeus, "wanted to propagate the human race" (618), it should not have been from women (619). The human race is fond of children (cf. *Herakles*, 636 and *Medea, passim*): this is one of the givens. But Hippolytus finds procreation unnecessary. Here is seen the depths of his rejection of Aphrodite. She is, after all, the goddess not only of sexual union, but of the continuation of life, of family relationship. This is not to say that Hippolytus is opposed to continuing the line[7] but that the need to consort with women is too high a price to pay. His words are

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father's eyes, but he is also trying to see himself as his father would. Implicitly he is comparing his life to the lives of others (Phaedra's, Theseus') and he is setting up his interior world in contrast to others' expectations of him. That is, he is becoming less self-contained. Other, outside elements are entering his consciousness.

[4] Curiously, in view of his attitude toward women, Hippolytus' world has a number of feminine characteristics: for example, he does not deal much with the world outside his own circle; he is apolypragmosynic, has no political ambition, no dynastic longings, little competitive spirit; he is devoted to the "mate" within his closed world. For him, nature (at least the meadow) is closed, so that the outdoor setting becomes his equivalent of the house, woman's domain. See, for example, Shaw and Bongie.

[5] Sale, 44-56.

[6] Solmsen, Chapter III, esp. 71-4.

[7] We may note that Hippolytus is the end of the line (cf. 1340-1), punished for his "crimes" against generation.

presumptuous, but sincere (unlike Jason's at *Medea* 573-5). They are also impersonal (until line 640): *mortals* could buy children in the temples (620-24). Next he imagines a father paying to be rid of his daughter (627-9) and a deluded man bringing home the useless, extravagant, evil creature (630-33). He does not include himself in this picture of family life. Possibly he is too young; possibly too we ought to recognize his isolation from his father's family and his illegitimacy as factors contributing to his idiosyncratic view. Perhaps, too, the perfection he has achieved in his ideal world plays its part. He does not need to continue himself because death and especially disintegration are not really part of his world view. He wants his life to continue and end unchanged (87). It does not happen exactly as he imagined. It is true, of course, that he does die a virgin. But it is also true that Artemis leaves him because of the change in him, not in herself. Hippolytus' words are odd: not only in the presumptuousness of desiring to change the workings of the cosmos, to clean up propagation, but in thinking so little of the continuation of the line as to suggest that Zeus is more interested in the propagation of the species than human beings are. Odd and perhaps ironic in view of the picture of Zeus we see in the Prometheus story who planned to wipe out the human race.

But even Hippolytus, though he wishes that women did not exist, though he tries to avoid contact with them, even he cannot long pretend that they are not there. In his speech, having reinstated women to the world, he next fantasizes an arrangement by which women would be served by inarticulate animals. Can there be a touch of irony in his proposal of contact between women and animals in view of Nurse's allusion to Pasiphae's taurine paramour (338)? If so the irony is unintentional as far as he understands what he is saying.[8] Hippolytus realizes the vices of speech. A woman, a servant, has just broken into his world which excludes women as always evil. But can we say of Hippolytus that he is an innocent, pure soul, just learning about evil? He does know enough to consciously reject it (cf. 102, 106). He has purposely set up a world in opposition to the one he knows or at least believes exists. The man may be naive, but his exclusions are deliberate: he is not innocent of evil thoughts about women; he has failed to get below the surface of the social world. His suspicions about women have been confirmed (cf. 106, 640-51): communication between women and from women is evil. He has twice shown himself incapable of the give and take of dialogue, first in the prologue with his old servant and again with Nurse (as is clear from his reaction to line 615). His second proposal for women amounts to this:

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[8] On Euripides' ironic allusions to other stages of the legend being staged, see Eisner.

that they be more like himself, that they be more isolated, less communicative. True, he speaks, and so does not literally deny himself the right to speak as he does propose that women should be denied. But quite obviously he does not use speech as a means of getting at the truth (cf. lines 641-50 and 954-7). As Segal writes, "Hippolytus has his place truly in the wild, among the beasts which he hunts."[9]

His last wish is that someone teach women to be *sōphrōn* (667). On the surface this is a more positive wish, possibly the beginning of a new kind of awareness, a wish to be able to include women among the virtuous. It is, however, questionable whether Hippolytus believes that *sōphrosunē* can be taught (cf. 79, 921-2). Hippolytus creates his world and himself as a reflection of Artemis and as a counter to the world of society, both of which he only partly understands. But sadly, it is only in his fictive world that he can be himself. Outside of it he is at a loss. But the creation of the perfect world is a credit to his imaginative and aesthetic sense. Even if it is ruinous to him as a *politikon zōon* and hurtful to those around him, the positive side still remains. This is the essence of his tragedy: he does die because of his virtue. But he dies for other reasons too: he dies partly because of the collision of worlds, his own, his father's, his stepmother's and her servant's. Even his virtue is compromised in his own mind when he contemplates renouncing the oath he swore to Nurse; but he does not do so.

Hippolytus' other wishes attest the inadequacy of his world and his growing awareness of it. When he must face his father, he admits for the first time to being out of his element (986-91). For the first time he must put into words a portrait of himself (994-1000). Since his idealized view of himself and the world was complete in itself, he has never had to reflect it, to "bring it out of doors" (cf. 650) before. Now he must measure himself and his life according to others' perception of him and his perception of others. Both shift as he makes his first feeble attempts at self-scrutiny. No one is more *sōphrōn* (995). However presumptuous this may sound to his father and to the audience, given Hippolytus' limited knowledge of other mortals, it is, in his own idiosyncratic view of the virtue in question, altogether and literally true. He is *sōphrōn* in all things without exception (80).[10] He does not conspire to do injustice nor keep company for that purpose, as he believes Phaedra did (cf. 645-650). He chooses his friends for their *aidōs*. He does not spread evil rumors nor repay evil for evil. This is unusual.[11] He is the same to friends both

[9] Segal (1978), 133; cf. 134-6 and Zeitlin 56-7, 86-7.
[10] Sale, 44-56.
[11] Dover, 193.

absent and present. He has remained virgin. Apparently Hippolytus believes Phaedra to be guilty of all the behavior of which he claims innocence, and with some cause. He is not a derider of his companions: he has just heard Theseus attempt to destroy his credibility through mockery (992-3). All his remarks carry implicit comparisons and contrasts. The fact that Hippolytus cannot persuade his father of his innocence can be laid partly to his exclusive and self-contained existence. He has very little knowledge of the outside world on which to base his self-defense. His contrasts arise from his limited experience within the play. How could his father know him? How could he know his father or know what to say to him?

And when he wishes for a witness like himself (1078-79), is he not beginning to realize that he is not complete in himself? Far from wishing women out of existence, he visualizes Phaedra still alive and assisting in his defense (1023).

''May I die without honor or fame, without a city or home...if I am an evil man'' (1028-31). The man who excluded the *kakoi* (as who indeed does not?), whose one certainty was that he was the most virtuous of men, is forced by the circumstance, in which he finds himself in the presence of a man who thinks the worst of him, to see himself with that man's eyes.

Hippolytus' perfect world has been destroyed. It could only last as long as it was not reflected in the world at large. It worked only as a secret between Hippolytus and Artemis, known only to the young man and his fellow worshipers. Like Phaedra's secret, once let out in the world, it is distorted (cf. 948-957). In his defense, he even begins to doubt the value of his piety (1060-1) and yet he realizes that no words can save him, not even the breaking of a solemn oath (1062-3). He wishes the house would cry out in his defense (1074-5) and that he could be outside himself and see how much he suffers (1078-9). He is alone. He needs another person to weep for him. This is the price he has paid for his perfection, by nature antisocial. His companion in the woods is not with him now. Artemis is not the same present and absent. She will never weep for him, nor long mourn his loss. It is Theseus himself who will finally be the witness his son longed for.

His life was beautiful, but fragile, all too easily broken into by the world for which it was created as a substitute. His experience in his own world has not prepared him for anything else. His fantasy of life tells us something of how he views this world. He measures himself by his own standard and finds himself perfect. He measures society by his creation and finds only corruption. He has excluded not only Aphrodite but nearly everything as corrupting influences: the political life, society, con-

tinuation of life through family and children, sympathy for those in pain and error, experience as a teacher. He does not admit degrees of goodness: there are only the *sōphrones* and the *kakoi*. His fantasies (this at least is what they seem to be when displaced from the meadow and woods and moved to the palace) of an ideal life both separate him from and connect him with others in the play.

Paradoxically, his interest in nature connects him with the women's world. The chorus enters singing of another beautiful place, different from Hippolytus', but sharing some of its characteristics (cf. 127 and 78). But theirs is a place of work and open, if not to all, to this group of women, to whom the meadow would be closed. Hippolytus' meadow has *aidōs* as its gardener: it is not a place for the ordinary work of daily life as theirs is.

Phaedra's delirious fantasy puts her into Hippolytus' dream. For her, nature is open, liberating. For him it is confining: his meadow is closed, sacred. But in Phaedra's dream she is no longer confined to the world of the palace. She moves freely from stream to meadow, to mountain, to plain, from rest to strenuous activity, wherever her fancy takes her. And her fancy takes her dangerously close to admitting what she has vowed not to tell. And so she is ashamed and hides, returning to her world of secrecy and constraining *aidōs*. *Aidōs* is what makes Hippolytus most himself: he does not confuse himself with the delusion that it is ambiguous or double. *Aidōs* tears Phaedra apart: for her it is, whether one among several or itself alone, ambiguous and potentially treacherous (see chapter 3). Phaedra returns to her private world of silence and secrecy and we watch how that confinement is broken into by Nurse and chorus. Both her secret and her status combine to push her back into her confined world. No doubt for the first time she has given voice to her longings,[12] but perhaps not for the first time experienced this fantasy or one like it: she had after all built a temple looking from Athens toward Trozen where Hippolytus lived, before Theseus' crime put the two in close proximity. But the places he haunted would be known to her from personal experience no better after her arrival there. Like any woman, especially an aristocratic woman, she values her good name. But unlike Pericles' ideal woman Phaedra wants fame too (329, 331-2, 403-4). For a woman that involves risk, a risk Phaedra runs and finds too costly.

Her great speech introduces us to her private world. It brings out of doors her interior life. She reasons; but her speech is more emotional than logical. When she curses the world's first adulteress (407) she is seeking the beginnings, the first causes, the woman who first broke the

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[12] Knox, esp., 8

closed world (cf. *thuraious*, 409) and corrupted the ideal existence.[13] By her curse she longs to undo the past, her own and the world's. Like Hippolytus, she betrays a negative view of the world outside herself (cf. 376, 378, 381-3, 384, 386, 389-90, 395, 397, 404, 405, 407, 412, 413-14, 420, 425, 428-30).[14] She will die to keep from being part of that world. Her drastic decision and action—for which we need seek no cause other than her vision of an ideal life—do not altogether succeed nor altogether fail, as we shall see when her husband returns. She had talked about human failure in conjunction with human potential for knowing what is right. She admits, in spite of this—and it is no small admission for a woman of Phaedra's intelligence and perceptiveness—that she will be *kakon* to another (728). Phaedra's long speech returns her to the confined world of the palace. In her imagination the building itself, its ceilings and walls, becomes animate. It is interesting to notice that except where Phaedra is speaking of herself, she speaks impersonally, as a comparison of her speech to that of Nurse, who gives specific examples from myth and life, makes clear. For all her self-absorption, for all that it would be difficult to name a person, human or divine whom we could say she admires, Phaedra is socially aware.[15] Her world does extend beyond herself and her walls to her children whose good name is a reflection of her own. Her image of Time's mirror reflects this aspect of her concern with her reputation in this world.

In her image of time's mirror we see reflected her concern with the one world seeing the other. The imaginary *parthenos* sees herself. Time reflects that image to the world outside. Once the image goes out into the world, it can no longer be confined to the solitary viewer's perception. It changes with time and the perception of other viewers. Phaedra had been alone, fantasizing about her honor, dreaming of winning a moral victory. When she lets the secret out, the perception of it is distorted by Nurse, who sees nothing honorable in it (see esp. 358-9). As in the image the solitary viewer sees one thing, but the anonymous viewers of time's mirror see something quite other. In a word, Phaedra, in spite of her final attempt to control the future perception of herself, fails in the long run to confine her world.

Having assured the secrecy of the present witnesses, she does try to return her world to its former confinement. She has by her own fantasy,

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[13] Solmsen, 67-9 on Euripides' interest in the "remoter causes"

[14] On Phaedra's moral optimism, see Manuwald 145-8. Although Phaedra is optimistic about her own intellect, she is also deeply pessimistic, especially with regard to the possibility of moral success for others. Her moral attitudes, like those of others in the drama, are ambivalent and tend to the solipsistic: that is, she (like the others) is incapable of seeing others as moral subjects.

[15] See Zeitlin, 55.

by letting others share it, broken into Hippolytus' closed world. Her lie, which finally overturns his world, insists on the contrary that she remained intact in her confined palace world and he attempted to break into it. This is her last hopeless fantasy: the re-creation of her world before she ever saw Hippolytus. Her plan works for only a brief moment: for in his *kommos* Theseus does sing of her as if she had been the perfect wife and he suggests someone Phaedra would have admired: for his words about his own less than perfect wife would be more to the point had he been the husband of Alcestis or Andromache or Penelope. Even Phaedra's active imagination could not foresee the arrival of Artemis to inform against her: her rationalism leaves no room for a *theos apo mēchanēs*.[16] Phaedra's last scene is an attempt to reinstate the now fictional world she has lost. She curses Nurse twice (683-4) and prays for her utter annihilation. Now, she laments, "I shall not die *eukleeis*" (687). "But I need *kainōn logōn*," new words, new fictions. She begins by inventing a Hippolytus who will break his oath (in spite of his words at 656-60) to save his name (as perhaps she would do), then dismisses Nurse whose presence is too strong a reminder of her lost reputation, and swears the chorus to silence. Through these three preliminary steps and her *heurēma* (716), she succeeds in reviving her lost world. Now she will be able to leave *euklea bion* to her children (717, cf. 687). Phaedra returns to her old life and dies, after rewriting the end of her story to make it conform to her picture of herself and her relationship to the outside world of reputation. In death and in her imagination she sees herself as having both her desires (*the man*[17] as Nurse brutally put it and a life of glory and good fame), two desires which she could never have together even in delirium.

Nurse is dismissed by her mistress to think for herself (708-9). Her part is over. She no longer has a reason to be. She has been a pawn in others' fantasies. Nurse's interior landscape (of which we have a few glances) is a foil to Phaedra's. Her life of service has been other-directed and yet the exigencies of that kind of life do offer some little scope for imagining another, for contrasting her life to the enviable life of her mistress and for comparing our lives to the life of the gods. Nurse sees no way out, no single solution in fantasy or imagination. Even her last words reveal an outlook that keeps trying, that manipulates the data anew with each fresh development. Though Nurse is concerned with the world beyond (195-7), death is not one of her options. Whether she fears it[18] or longs for it is an unanswerable question, though probably some of both (cf.

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[16] Phaedra, interestingly, considering her role in Aphrodite's plan, is not given to blaming her own or others' short-comings on the gods. Cf. Lloyd-Jones, 147.

[17] Zeitlin, 102.

[18] Sale, 67-71.

250-1, 353-361). What is clear is that she is firmly rooted to this life and unbreakably attached to Phaedra in spite of her advice to keep love elastic (259-60). Life is hard (189-90, 193, 207), but it is alluring (191-4, 471-2).

It is Nurse, like Hippolytus' aged attendant, who suggests comparison of our lives with the world of the gods, using *muthoi* as evidence. The gods are not ashamed of loving. They still live in heaven (456-8). In fact, to listen to Nurse's talk, there is little gods would be ashamed of. Nurse pictures that divine life vaguely, and in terms of the one she knows. On the other hand, her picture of death differs from Phaedra's: she does not think of how she will be to the world after her death. To her the end is annihilation (357) and freedom from the concerns of the world (355-7). She does not imagine carrying her worries into eternity. Perhaps she should have died then (shortly after line 361), when she longed for release, after the shock of Phaedra's disclosure. But Nurse is not one to abandon her post. The new knowledge stunned her, but she survived to come back for more. Not an inventive person, but a survivor, Nurse adapts quickly, bringing her slender wits to bear on each new situation. We will never know what were her last thoughts, her final possibility for saving Phaedra's life, but Nurse goes out still trying.

Life is a pain but we love it. We are best off if we adapt ourselves to the shifts of fortune. And Nurse has a cliché to meet and understand each shift of circumstance. Life is change. Only by being flexible can we succeed. Nurse uses fantasy as a reproach to her mistress when she says: "your father should have begotten you under fixed terms or with other gods above, if you will not be satisfied with the present *nomoi*" (459-61). To her these *nomoi* are not fixed customs or laws (such as Hippolytus and Artemis describe) but situational responses. The gods she uses are the inconsistent deities of story, pictured in terms she knows (and probably more like the gods who make their appearance in the play than Hippolytus' idealized version of them). Phaedra (as Nurse implies) demands a world without change, in which the morality of an act does not depend upon the *kairos*. Phaedra enters that unchanging world when she dies. Ironically it was with the world of change that she was finally concerned, with her reputation in this world. After her death it continues to shift.

While Phaedra is hanging herself, the chorus fantasizes another mode of existence, an escape from the present reality. By swearing to keep silent they have already effectively removed themselves from the action. After the death of Phaedra they say little, but are forced to bear witness to the whole. Eager for knowledge at their entrance they question Nurse. But when questioned by Theseus they lie (804-5) and nothing they say has consequence after that. A lie can change the world. The chorus' lie puts them into the make-believe world they envision in the second

stasimon. But even there they keep being driven back to the present.[19] The other form of life they create is a clear response to their perception of the world. But they realize there is no escape and are drawn back to the terrible scene in the palace from their flight to lands beyond (lands of tears, 740), drawn by the white-winged Cretan ferry, back to the peculiar sorrows of the palace and to the ropes, from the ropes of the ships to the ropes hanging from the beams (Phaedra's silent witnesses, 769, 418). They are driven back to the Cretan origins, to the beginning and ending of the story of Phaedra, to the real *archē* (cf. 272). And thus they are able to bring to a close the role of Phaedra with their final lines (773-5). They do not wish away the beginnings (as Nurse does in *Medea*).[20] It is too late for that.

Phaedra dies closed in her room, as the chorus reviews her life and her coming from abroad to be Theseus' bride. Theseus returns home from abroad to find his life ruined. His delusions about his wife correspond to her wish for herself, to be seen as a good and faithful wife. Her influence continues; her imagined existence has gained reality in her husband's perception. Even before her lie is known, Phaedra's life after death is temporarily as she wished it.

When Theseus, overcome by pain and anger, faces his son, believing him guilty, having already sentenced him to exile, the king of Athens calls for a change in the order of things. His fantastic wish, like his son's, is threefold. Men, for all their cleverness, have failed at their most essential task. No one has ever been able to *phronein didaskein hoisin ouk enestin nous* (920).[21] To which Hippolytus responds that it would take a *deinos sophistēs* to do so, forgetting perhaps that Theseus' first wish corresponds to his own last (to teach women *sōphronein*). But the similarity points to a likemindedness in the two men, even in the heat of anger. The inappropriateness of Hippolytus' response here highlights that response and is recognized even by the younger man (923): but this is a question about which Hippolytus has been exercising his intellect (cf. 79-80, 667-8). Next Theseus wishes for a *tekmērion saphes* for distinguishing men's hearts, and double voices so that we would not be deceived. Again his fantasy corresponds to his son's wish that women be denied communication altogether, women being the ones in Hippolytus' view who bring evil into the world through speech (cf. 616, 624). Hippolytus' dream for a

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[19] On the Escape Ode: Eisner, 162-3; Graham; Padel; Parry; Segal (1965), esp., 133ff.

[20] Pucci, Chapter I, on the therapeutic power of the word and the effacing of otherness through rhetorical experience.

[21] On the vanity of human endeavors in various aspects of life, consider for example, lines 197, 375, 916; lines 301, 812, 1012; 535, 978, 1063, 1367. The pessimism is deep, but it is balanced by strong positive action and belief.

better world is more negative, but more efficient. Finally, Theseus suggests the creation of a new world (*allēn gaian*, 941) to make room for the unjust and evil. Like Hippolytus who wished out of existence those he considered the source of evil, Theseus fantasizes a world without the wicked, though being a more worldly man than his son, he does not wish them utterly out of existence. Even for Hippolytus the existence of women and the need for them were too obvious for him to continue with his first dream. Theseus, looking at his son, who is to his mind living proof of the deterioration of the human race from generation to generation, sees as the solution the removal, the exile, of evil men. If he could, he would exile his son beyond the boundaries of the world (1053-4). What is ironic about this wish is that his son had in a manner of speaking achieved a world free of evil, not in idle fancy, but in his remarkable, isolated existence with Artemis. That world is destroyed not so much because it is incomplete—in fact it is perfect—but because it is not the only possible world.

Theseus' world is colored by his heroic past, peopled still with the monsters he killed, the silenced witnesses who give reality to his deeds. His son has become one of those monsters and worse because he is not what he seems to be. Theseus, with his curse, calls back that world. Here is the most obvious example of a wish followed by its fulfillment in a play full of longings for other possibilities. "Would that you could say for me what I must say" cries Phaedra on that terrible brink of speaking. And Nurse obliges by saying for her the dreaded name (352). Hippolytus prays that his father will come to know the truth and so he does in a most unexpected way. Words, oaths, prayers, curses, are powerful in the *Hippolytus*. They are not used to heal, but to cause pain and grief.[22] Theseus had called Sinis of Isthmus and the Skironian rocks witnesses of his past heroism (977-80), witnesses which would fail him if he were to let Hippolytus get the better of him. Interestingly, in the messenger's speech three places are mentioned as being blotted out by the uncanny swell, among them, the Skironian cliffs and Isthmus (1206-9). His silent witnesses are sightless as well: being invisible they, their inhabitants, are also cut off from seeing.

The ideals of the men and women are crushed by realities more fantastic than any dreamed of in their wildest imaginings. The calm, benign natural world of Hippolytus, chorus, Phaedra is mirrored by both nature and the supernatural at its most violent. The world of men is reflected and distorted by that of the gods, beings no more free than the men and

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[22] Pucci, Chapter I, and Knox *passim*.

women.[23] Gods ought to be *sophoteroi* than men, the old servant suggested. That they are not so in the sense he means is clear: they do not forgive. Artemis can promise only honors and vengeance. In what ways do the gods differ from men? Honor and a name must be had at the price of the death of those who deny it to them. But the same can be said of Phaedra. They can promote their plans at a distance and through the agency of others, but so in their own ways do Theseus and Phaedra. They are bound by their word even against their will and better judgment, but so are Hippolytus and the chorus. They differ from men in that they do not die. Nor can their separate domains be broken into by anyone (1403-4). For them (as Nurse advised), ties to loved ones are flexible. "Easily you leave a long friendship" (1441). They differ from men too in that their will can create an unbreakable world: they have no need of dreams, imagination, creativeness. What they desire simply is, within the limitations explained by Artemis (1328-30). The gods do not need fantasy to create ideal worlds for themselves. And they have the world of men and women for their battleground.

Fantasies define character. Hippolytus' perfect world is his life. Phaedra's two sets of fantasies, one free and active, the other passive and confined, are the two sides of her life, the hidden reality of longing and fantasy breaking out of the enclosure where her sense of *aidōs* tells her she must live and die. Nurse bursts into Hippolytus' closed world: in order to make it whole again, he imagines a better world without women. But even his tirade shows it is impossible. His life has taken a new focus and it will shift yet again before he leaves it forever. Even in his denunciation his self-absorption which had heretofore been absolute is annihilated in a concern (uncharitable though it is) with others. Theseus' fantasies are connected with his past, as becomes more clear at the end of them when he laments the deterioration of the younger generations. His schemes for reform recall to his mind his ancient heroism: he connects Hippolytus with the monsters he killed who continue to keep his memory alive. The two worlds he imagines (940-43) were not necessary in his prime: heroes could in those days keep down the population of wrong doers. There are fewer heroes now and the world has become more complex and deceptive.

The actors invent new worlds in reaction to this one, in order to exclude those who make the world unbearable. Phaedra deliriously pictures herself in Hippolytus' world where she does not belong (cf. 212-214, 223-7, 232-5). Hippolytus destroys Phaedra's more lucid picture of

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[23] Hippolytus at least believes he is free (cf. 104); Artemis knows she is not (1328-34, 1319-20).

herself, and she in turn, in order to rebuild her shattered image of herself, becomes the vicious woman he created and destroys him. The created worlds take over the action: first Hippolytus', then Phaedra's, and finally Theseus'. Theseus' world is a thing of the past: his words ring of a time that will not come again. His feats are ossified and permanent. His son goes forth only once to face a Thesean monster and returns mangled beyond cure. Neither man can live in the other's world. Artemis' attempt to restore Hippolytus does nothing to rebuild his shattered world. Words are powerful in the *Hippolytus*. With a word Theseus kills his son. With a word silence is assured. Words create worlds for the characters and words enable them to absolve themselves. Theseus' utopian wish is a clear example. His reform scheme allows him to create and respond to a world worse than the one around him, a world of men who are not what they seem, men deteriorating with time. He then is able to make his son the prime example of the wickedness of youth, and himself noble in punishing him. Phaedra too uses speech to rebuild her world, to picture it as it was before love undermined it, to oppose herself to wicked women, to devise noble action from disgrace. Later she uses *logoi* to ruin Hippolytus, but first to clear her conscience by blaming Nurse and negatively characterizing Hippolytus, as he had her.

Artemis' words cause pain. Only Hippolytus and only at the end of his life, uses words to free his father and to heal himself.

The fantasies and dreams for reform are ambivalent. They picture a world without evil. But all are hurtful too: they show too great a tendency to see evil where there is none and too little interest in understanding what is the case. Coupled with the wishes for clear knowledge, these schemes appear all the more sinister. Their authors voice them in ignorance and sometimes couple them with a wish not to know. What makes these particular dreams and fantasies so inept is the *kairos*. For Hippolytus' ideal, perfect, life; Phaedra's struggle to be good in the face of temptation and overpowering desire; Theseus' reliving his past in a wish to remove evil from the world; even Nurse's dream that human life could be somehow less complicated: all these show human beings at their best and most creative. But all have used their art to hurt and exclude each other.

διssοὶ λόγοι λέγονται...

Dissoi Logoi

CHAPTER THREE

ΔΙ' 'ΑΝΤΙΛΟΓΙΑΣ

'Εσωφρόνησεν οὐκ ἔχουσα σωφρονεῖν
ἡμεῖς δ' ἔχοντες οὐ καλῶς ἐχρώμεθα. (1034-5)

A difficult pair of lines. Hippolytus has denied that women are *sōphrōn*. He has cried out for someone to teach them *sōphrosunē* (667-8). Earlier he had implied that *sōphrosunē* could not be taught or at least that learned virtue had less merit than the innate variety (79-80).[1] But here he suggests the possibility that Phaedra in her death acted virtuously even if she could not sustain a life of virtue. She had done the right thing: but he recognizes the difficulty she has created for him. Phaedra had, in her turn, just prior to her death, called for Hippolytus' education in the same virtue (731). It is clear that the two are using the word in different ways.[2]

Phaedra is in fact concerned with the shifting meanings of words and their values and references. "If only the *kairos* were clear there would not be the two of them having the same letters" (386-7). Interest in language and its relation to reality was keen in fifth century Athens as we know from the works of Prodicus, Protagoras, Thucydides.[3] This interest is reflected in the *Hippolytus*: not only do words shift meanings, but opposite predications are seen to belong to the same subject.[4]

Protagoras, according to Diogenes Laertius (DK 80A1), was the first to say that δύο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένους ἀλλήλοις. Forms of argumentation were high among the intellectual experiments of the second half of the fifth century. Perhaps the most characteristic form is *antilogikē* which "consists in causing the same thing to be seen by the same people now as possessing one predicate, now as possessing the opposite or contradictory predicate." Its essential feature is the "opposition of one *logos* to another."[5] Now, obviously, the *Hippolytus* is a drama and not an "intellectual experiment of the Greek enlightenment." But

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[1] See, for example, Sinclair, 70ff; Kerferd (1981), 131-138.

[2] Cf. Barrett on σεμνός (ad 93, 99); see also North, esp. 68-71 and 79-81.

[3] On fifth century interest in language, see Kerferd (1981), 68-77; Solmsen (1975), Chapter IV; Classen, *passim*; Stanford, esp. 4, 174.

[4] Is it possible that this theme (*antilogia*) is in part responsible for the widely disparate critical approaches to the play?

[5] Kerferd (1981), 61; Solmsen, Chapter I; Kerferd (ed.), esp. 4-5.

the playwright does play the variations of single and multiple predication, of *dissai phōnai* (cf. 928) or *dissoi logoi*. The sophistic "antilogical" method of arguing and of reaching the truth and of understanding the world and the nature of knowledge is evident throughout the play. The variations are displayed in the words of the characters as they express their views in each new situation, from the roles of the gods whose one-sided, almost abstract, nature necessitates single predication, to that of Nurse whose "philosophy of life" makes a virtue of radically changing her position with every new shift in circumstance.[6] In this "adventure in reason"[7] the audience is invited to participate.

The divine view is given most directly by the two goddesses, but is also reflected by the characters. It is, I believe, the statements of the goddesses which bring into focus the theme of shifting predications or *duo logoi*.[8] In the prologue Aphrodite divides mankind into two categories: those who honor the gods and those who are *mega phronōn* (5-6). That Hippolytus belongs to the latter class is made clear by the lines that follow. Hippolytus does not honor Aphrodite; he is *mega phronōn*, and he will die because of it. Much is said in the play and much done to contradict Aphrodite's statement and much done and said as well to confirm it, to which we will return shortly. But first let us consider Artemis' assessment of her favorite. Aphrodite, explains Artemis in the epilogue, hated Hippolytus for being *sōphrōn* (1402). "Your nobility of mind destroyed you," she says (1390). Simply put, Artemis claims that her rival destroyed Hippolytus for being good, but Aphrodite does not put it the same way. It may well be that Aphrodite hates Hippolytus for the same qualities for which Artemis loves him (cf. 14, 1302, 1002-6); but the values each attributes to these qualities are opposite. The same man, the same moral quality, the same action, each of these is perceived by one goddess as evil, by the other as good. By shifting focus, Euripides allows us to see Hippolytus with the perception of each goddess in turn. The same man is seen to be both *mega phronōn* and *sōphrōn*.

Again in the prologue, Aphrodite says that Phaedra, though *eukleēs*, still will die (47). Shortly before her death Phaedra bemoans the fact that "now no longer will I die *eukleēs*" (687), and then with the help of *kainōn logōn* (688) she discovers a way to pass *euklea bion* to her children (716-7). To what extent she succeeds, readers must judge for themselves. Two opposing *logoi* are applied to the same action. Artemis herself expresses

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[6] Knox, 5 on Nurse's second, third, and fourth thoughts.

[7] The terms "adventure in reason," "intellectual experiment of the Greek enlightenment" are borrowed from Solmsen (1975).

[8] On the gods supplying an explanation of human action in the play, see Luschnig *passim*.

the ambiguity with the words οἶστρον ἢ τρόπον τινὰ γενναιότητα (1300-1). How can the same action be both *eukleēs* and not *eukleēs*?

In the epilogue Artemis upbraids Theseus for letting loose his curse against his son when he could have used it against an enemy (εἰς ἐχθρόν τινα 1317). What she and Poseidon do not understand is that in human affairs such relationships constantly shift. The situation changes; what is appropriate to the situation changes: "if only the *kairos* were clear!" (386). At the moment Theseus utters his curse, Hippolytus is more an enemy to him than any he has faced before, more than any he could have imagined, a criminal born of his own seed. We should remember too that Theseus is in Trozen being punished by a year's exile precisely because he had killed his cousins the Pallantids. Under normal circumstances kinsmen are *philoi*, but they had been turned into *echthroi* through exigencies of which we are not told, but no doubt political realities, as we may surmise from Theseus' constant apostrophes to the polis; he even politicizes his son's death (1459-60). But the fact of kinship only increases Theseus' ire. Hippolytus reminds his father of their closeness, οὐ μὴν φίλους γε κἄτι μᾶλλον ἢ φίλους (914) and draws from Theseus the first of his denials of human progress. The older man cannot yet face the fact that this is his son, not until he steels himself with a generalization about the degeneration of the human race. "Look at this man (943), ὅστις ἐξ ἐμοῦ γεγὼς," he can finally say, and from this commence his mocking attack on his son. But after the fulfillment of the curse, the repetition of οὕνεκ' ἐστὶν ἐξ ἐμοῦ (1259), makes him moderate his sense of righteousness rewarded and wickedness justly served. Theseus has good cause for knowing that among mortals the friends/enemies polarity is not fixed.

A comparison of Phaedra's definition of *philoi* and Hippolytus' sheds some light on this question. Phaedra takes the traditional view: φίλος μ' ἀπόλλυσ' οὐχ ἑκοῦσαν οὐχ ἑκών (319). When she has convinced herself that this *philos* will intentionally do her harm (690-2) she is willing to anticipate him. He has ceased to be *philos*. Hippolytus' definition is stricter, more abstract. His distinction is on moral grounds, οὐδεὶς ἄδικος ἐστί μοι φίλος (614). Nor does he repay evil for evil (999). Neither the practical nor the idealistic definition is adequate as the fact that each is wrong about the other's character, intention, and action suggests.

What of the gods? Artemis speaks of Aphrodite as *echthistē* (1301). Her words imply that this enmity is a permanent state of being (because Aphrodite's nature and function are opposite to her own). This enmity extends to and is worked out in the mortal world. Artemis will kill whoever of mortals is *philtatos* to Kupris (1421). We cannot look to these gods for a stable, immutable, and consistent idea of the pious (if we take pious to mean "loved by the gods)". Each views Hippolytus in one way

and excludes its opposite; only together do they offer an adequate picture. Neither goddess will take a moral stand on Phaedra's action. Artemis refers to both Phaedra's stinging passion and her nobility (1300-1). But ultimately to Artemis, not Phaedra, but Aphrodite is responsible for the catastrophe, so that her two words (*oistron* and *gennaiotēta*) refer not to the same thing, but to two different phenomena, the passive state of Phaedra as victim and her active struggle to overcome her passion (cf. 1302-4).[9] Aphrodite considers Phaedra only as the means to the accomplishment of her plan, vengeance on her "enemies" (49). The fact that Phaedra should be a friend, that she is a worshiper and has built a temple to Kupris, is nothing to the goddess compared to vengeance (48-50, but cf. 5).

The gods' predications are single and immutable. They do not see another side. Aphrodite sees only the impious Hippolytus because that is how he is to her. To Artemis he is pious and just, because to her that is how he is. This is by no means relativism, but rather a radical realism.[10] There is no suggestion that it is so only because each thinks it is so. Each goddess' view of Hippolytus is objectively real. But that is not to say that it is whole. It is misleading to look at only parts of a character as Aphrodite does in the prologue and Artemis does in the epilogue. The human actors, too, judge, speak, and act on partial knowledge of each other. The divinities do not recognize multiple truths because they can see things only from the most subjective point of view. But although Aphrodite can see Hippolytus only as *mega phronōn* because indeed that is how he is to her, and Artemis can see him only as *sōphrōn* because that is how he is to her, we see him in both (as well as in other) relations. The divine view of persons and events as having only a single predication is a mode of viewing that is taken up in turn by Phaedra, Hippolytus, and Theseus.

Euripides calls upon his audience to participate intellectually in the drama. One way he does this is by shifting focus: for example, in the prologue we hear two monologues which show two opposite sides of Hippolytus; then the parodos moves our attention to the women's world, both inside and outside of the palace. The playwright involves us in the shifting predications also by violently altering our sympathies in successive scenes. The audience is caused to see the same thing not only as possessing now one and now a contradictory predicate, but as possessing both predicates at the same time. The gods in the play are (in part, at

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[9] Nurse, on the other hand, has called Phaedra's struggle *hubris* (47). See Reckford, 308-9 on Artemis' paradoxical description.

[10] Kerferd (1981), Chapter IX, esp. 92-3.

least) a representation of a way of looking at the world. To them there are no shifts; there is no new knowledge coming from the outside that could cause them to change their views; there is no relativity of act to *kairos*. There is only fact and declaration. How adequate is such a view is surely one of the things the play is about. What Hippolytus is to Aphrodite, what he is to Artemis, each is part of what he is. A man is more than another's view of him and he is more than his image of himself. But both are part of what he is. Even Hippolytus comes to realize that his picture of himself is incomplete: he must see himself through others' eyes and this brings about a drastic shift in the words he uses to describe himself.

Hippolytus in the prologue as he appears to us and as he characterizes himself is in direct contradiction to Aphrodite's words about him. His virtues are *aidōs* (78), *sōphrosunē* (in all things, 80), *eusebeia* (83). We see him first, this man characterized by a god as impious, performing a simple and sincere act of loving piety. His life is a prayer to his goddess. Throughout the play he continues to use the same words of himself and to make the same distinctions (of 79-81). In his speech in the prologue he seems to recognize no possibility of shifting meanings of words. He is convinced throughout of his own goodness and of the evil of whatever differs from it (cf. 604, 614). He spends his life and goes to his death sure of his own piety and *sōphrosunē* (cf. 656, 995, 1007, 1061, 1100-1, 1364, 1365, 1367-9), but in the face of this certainty, undercutting it to a degree, doubts have begun to creep in as early as his second scene.

Contradictions begin to appear in the dialogue between the old man and Hippolytus. For having seen the pious Hippolytus, we see following hard upon him the impious Hippolytus who refuses to pay respect to Kupris while acknowledging her divinity and her *erga*. He is objectively both pious and impious. This passage prepares for several other contradictions in Hippolytus' self-image. On the one hand Hippolytus agrees with his retainer that there is *charis* in those who are easy to talk to (95-6). But if he values the quality, it is not one of his own virtues. His servant is overly careful in addressing him and when the topic becomes disagreeable to Hippolytus, the young man changes the subject and walks off. Not until his death scene does he show any ease in personal relations, any sympathetic understanding of another human being. He abuses Nurse. He gives an oration to his father. Another anomaly is suggested by the deliberate use of *semnos* in two (or more) different senses.[11] Hippolytus agrees that *to semnon* is hated (93-4). Aphrodite is then called *semnē* (99, 103). Although Artemis has been called *semnotata* in the hymn

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[11] Barrett ad 93, 99; Sale, 35-7, 44-5.

that precedes Hippolytus' monologue (61), *semnotēs* in itself is apparently not grounds for worship in Hippolytus' theology. Here Hippolytus implicitly denies that he is *semnos* (94), but he uses the adjective of himself in his last scene (1364). The double sense of the word is (see Barrett ad 99) a means of showing similarity between Hippolytus and the god he rejects. Finally, *sophia* is esteemed by Hippolytus (90). But in the course of the play it changes value for him, depending on the subject to which it is attached. If applied to a woman or women it takes on a negative, disreputable, significance: *sophēn de misō* (640), *en tais sophaisin* (643; cf. 641). Although Hippolytus is the play's most simple character, given to thinking in terms of one meaning for each word, and therefore incapable of duplicity, he does find that the *kairos* can affect the meaning of words. Before considering how Hippolytus' thought and language are shaped by the way he is seen by others, let us look briefly at Phaedra.

What is remarkable about Phaedra is her ability to grasp the potential contradiction of predication (a capacity which may come close to the quality Barrett calls her "intellectual honesty" on p. 232).

'Εκ τῶν γὰρ αἰσχρῶν ἐσθλὰ μηχανώμεθα (331).

The passion is shameful, but the struggle against it and victory over it are noble. Human beings can act in such a way as to turn *aischra* into *esthla*. Both seemingly contradictory predications apply to Phaedra's present emotional and intellectual state. Phaedra is concerned with both knowledge and its consequence. The knowledge would ruin Nurse (327, 329), but it brings Phaedra *timē* (329). Again, this is not relativism.

Throughout her great speech Phaedra is concerned with the relationship of knowledge to action. Failure does not result from intellectual shortcoming. Human beings are capable of knowing what is right (376-80), but we do not work it out (381) for one reason or another. What she herself values is *to kalon* (cf. 382) which may well be equivalent to her honor.[12] Her reputation for honor is the one thing she values more than her life. But a reputation is a fragile thing. Here is the heart of the appearance/reality question: Phaedra is concerned that she know what is right (cf. 376, 388-90, 426-7), that she carry it out in action (cf. 381, 391-402) and that she be recognized for her sacrifice (cf. 403-4, 430). There can be no doubt that Phaedra's anxiety is not only over seeming to be virtuous, but also over being virtuous, although for her at this point in her story the two very likely amount to the same thing.[13] She knows that she could not seem virtuous if she were not: nothing makes this more apparent than her image of Time's mirror.

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[12] Kovacs (*AJP*) and Claus.

[13] Kovacs (*AJP*), 300.

Phaedra's reasons for needing to preserve her reputation are in part selfless. She does not want to bring disgrace upon her husband and children because it enslaves a man to share in the knowledge of ill done by a parent (424-5). Again, knowledge and action are connected: knowledge has its consequences. This is the reason for her secrecy.

One thing alone, she says, competes in life: γνώμην δικαίαν κἀγαθήν (a good and just mind or means of knowing 426-7). When she concludes her speech with that moving image of Time's mirror, there is, it is true, a confusion (as Barrett notes p. 238) between the self-revealing and other-revealing mirror. The young woman in the image sees herself, but Time's mirror reveals the wicked to others. Phaedra confuses these two because she does not admit the distinction between seeming and being. At least, although she is aware of it in others, she will not allow it to apply to herself. Time is the bringer of truth to light: in Time's mirror one is seen as evil if, but only if, one is evil. A favorite sophistic paradox is that it is not possible to say what is false.[14] To put this another way, knowledge must be knowledge of something. It has at least a logical existence. Time's mirror does not reveal what is not. This image is an idealist's creation, of the world as it ought to be. The subject (the imaginary *parthenos*) must see herself too, as she is and as she appears to others in Time's mirror.

Phaedra does realize that a distinction between seeming and being can be made. The evil of adultery began, she surmises, among the noble, "for when shameful things seem proper to the good, surely they will seem honorable to the *kakoi*" (412-13). She does not mean to say that moral standards shift,[15] but as her next two lines show, that the names may change. Those who decide upon a shameful course of action are putting some pleasure before *to kalon* (cf. 382). If *aischra* appear as *kala* to the *kakoi*, that does not make them so and their perpetrators will be revealed as they are in time (cf. 428-30). Phaedra has a strong historical imagination, but it does not include change in being, only in seeming.

The unifying theme of Phaedra's speech is cognition and its relation to action. We can know what is right (380), which is only possible to one who believes in absolutes. In the rest of her speech she is fairly clear, if not always explicit, on what she considers *kala* and *aischra*, but there is a place for ambiguity and she touches upon this in that much discussed passage, lines 381-387. "There are many pleasures of life, long talks and leisure (or long, leisurely talks[16]), a delightful evil and *aidōs*." I can see

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[14] Kerferd, 89ff.

[15] Solmsen, 158 n72.

[16] Kovacs (*AJP*), 298.

no reason to suppose that these are not her pleasures.[17] She lists no pleasures which are in themselves evil, simply because what is morally repugnant is not a pleasure. "But," she continues, "they[18] are ambiguous (duplex, *dissai*), the one not evil, the other a burden on the house (*achthos oikōn*)." She is not suggesting that some pleasures are good and others evil, an interpretation which would make nonsense of her words "if the *kairos* were clear..." (386). We do not need to add another line contrasting a good and a bad pleasure.[19] Instead, Phaedra finds that the many pleasures of life are ambiguous. The oxymoron *terpnon kakon* shows her own feelings in spontaneous recognition that *scholē* (or long leisurely talks) has its good and bad sides. Pleasure is an evil only if it gets in the way of *to kalon* (382) and prevents our accomplishing what we know to be right. Therefore she goes on to add *ou kakē* (385) to correct *kakon* of the previous line. Long talks and leisure, far from being evil in themselves, are the means by which the truth is reached (cf. 385). All the pleasures she lists, including *aidōs* can be good or bad. Phaedra has divided the general term *hēdonai* into a number of individual pleasures no one of which can be said to be good or bad in itself. For then the problem would be solved and there would be no ambiguity. Pleasures, like so many things in life and in the play, can be both evil and not evil, that is, *dissai*. This small passage is but part of an ambiguous whole. It is hard, therefore, to agree with those critics[20] who believe that Phaedra is only explaining her success and not at all admitting her failure. She has quite obviously failed to keep her first resolve (to keep silence). She admits that her second resolve has also failed: she has not been able to conquer the *anoia*. That she intends to succeed nevertheless is apparent: her third and most drastic plan is still in effect. Her speech like so many things in the play cannot be seen as one thing or the other: it is an *apologia*, stating her thoughts positively and revealing her thought processes and motivations. Her "intellectual honesty"[21] however does not let her make any excuse for herself, nor to overlook that important part of her plan which has not succeeded and on which she dwells at some length (394-7).

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[17] With Barrett ad 381-5; but cf. Solmsen (1973). See also Dodds 102.

[18] With Kovacs (n13, above), I think it best to take *dissai* as referring to *hēdonai* (and therefore also to each of the pleasures Phaedra lists); but I differ with Kovacs' explanation of lines 384-5 as a list of pleasures, harmful and harmless together (297).

[19] As Kovacs suggests (298). Should we demand that Phaedra's logic be perfect? Why can she not say that there are many pleasures in life and name only two (or three)? Her argument is in general more agglutinative than syllogistic.

[20] Claus and Kovacs, for example.

[21] Barrett's term ad 388-90.

The world for Phaedra is a precarious place. Although we know and understand what is good and right, we do not accomplish it, either because we do not make the effort or because we convince ourselves that some other *hēdonē* is better than *to kalon*. Phaedra has certainly made the effort. The body of her speech makes herself the example of *gnōmē* in action (beginning at 388). She has recognized the power of her emotions and is able to look at her passion (*anoian*, *Kuprin*, *noson*) objectively as hostile to her intellect and separable from it. She rejects the *ergon* (405) with an indignant denunciation which lets us know that she will never allow herself to be persuaded that *aischra* are *kala* (411-412). At the end of her speech her thought moves to the consequences of knowledge. One cannot, she implies in her last three lines, do evil and escape notice forever. But recent events have caused Phaedra to recognize another danger in life. The *kairos*, which involves a complex of relationships at any given time, can cause what is morally neutral (*ou kakē*) to bring ruin to the house. The first two points of her plan left her open to situations in which the appropriate response was ambiguous. Can we not read those troublesome lines (382-7) as a newly formulated addendum to the conclusions of her long nights of thought? *Aidōs*, for example, contributes to her decision to confess to Nurse (335), but shortly before had caused her to hide her head and resume a non-speaking part (244). Speech brings her greater honor, but also forces her to admit a dishonorable passion.[22] Her only escape from the perils of shifting circumstance is death.

Nurse's reply is manipulative. She counters the main theme of Phaedra's speech by implying that knowledge can be without consequence (466). She goes one step further than Phaedra by insisting (on the authority of the ancients) that the precedent for illicit love is set by the gods. The dialogue that follows this sophistic argument[23] shows that Phaedra sees what her Nurse is up to. It is full of shifts in the meanings of words and full too of shifting predications. Nurse's words, for example, are both *kaloi lian* (487) and *aischistous* (499; cf. 503, 505). Nurse admits that her words are shameful, but better than Phaedra's fine words (500). But better than the name is *tourgon* (501-2), as if the name and the deed were separate and equal entities, as if she could do away with predication altogether and remove the moral qualities from actions, as if all that Phaedra had to say was high-sounding words (490) with no reference to the world outside of language.

These speeches are part of a pattern in the play in which each action is a contradiction of what preceded it. Aphrodite tells us of an impious

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[22] Knox, 13, 17; Dodds, 103.

[23] Cf. Antiphon, *peri alhētheias*, P. Oxy. XI no. 1364, Col. 1 and Furley, esp. 90-1.

Hippolytus; we see a pure and pious young man. Phaedra is said to be dying in silence, but she can hardly stop talking; her words continue to scream even after her death. At first Phaedra is emotional and nearly insane, but her great speech issues from a rational, clear-sighted woman. This thoughtful speech is answered by Nurse's sophistic speech which undermines Phaedra's moral universe and then by Hippolytus' irrational denunciation. The next scene shows Phaedra moving from victim of passion to knowing agent of vengeance. After her death, new relationships are introduced. Theseus' accusation is in a style similar to his son's first speech.[24] Hippolytus must answer with an *apologia* which has much in common with Phaedra's great speech. The roles are reversed.

We cannot see one character as helpless and innocent victim of a vicious universe or of vengeful gods and another as agent of vengeance. Polarities are established[25] and then they are blurred.[26] If the dualist

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[24] See Finley, 31 on the contrast between the "rash intensity" of Theseus' speech and Hippolytus' "extremely careful self-defense."

[25] Every movement alternates such polarities, for example:

Prologue and Parodos:			
	divine, single, female		coercion
		talk about the human/divine	
	human, plural, male		freedom
		talk about human/divine	
		Hippolytus healthy	
	human, plural, female		divine and male interference
		Phaedra sick	
Phaedra scenes:			
	female, plural, human	irrational Phaedra/mundane Nurse	
		rational Phaedra	
		irrational Hippolytus	male intruder*
		Phaedra alive	female intruder*
Theseus scenes:			
Theseus:	single, male, human	irrational Theseus	Phaedra dead, but "speaking"
	First messenger: human, male		rational Hippolytus
	Second messenger (Artemis): divine, female		
	Theseus, Hippolytus, Artemis: human/divine; male/female; single/plural		

*Irrational Phaedra is displaced from her proper place in the house. The approach to Hippolytus is made in the house: a woman has intruded into his life, but inside, in woman's place. Hippolytus bursts out, the male intruding into the female scene, but in man's place.

[26] Among the distinctions that are blurred:

Man/God: the characters not only try to be, but are, better than their gods.

Slave/Master: all the slaves give their masters advice.

Male/Female: Hippolytus' world is confined and unambitious; Phaedra is interested in fame.

structure shows a "tendency to fit complex phenomena into simple dichotomous classifications,"[27] then by asserting and subsequently undercutting those distinctions, perhaps Euripides is reasserting the complexity and interconnectedness of seemingly disparate phenomena.

Nurse temporarily wins her battle of words with Phaedra. But events show that she disastrously underestimated the potency of the word. For it was the name more than the deed which Phaedra feared and it is the name of the sickness which she makes Hippolytus share (730; cf. 933). And share it he does, not only in his father's mind, but in his inchoate self-doubt.

Aphrodite had announced the drama as her example of the punishment of the one man in Trozen who was *mega phronōn* to her. Artemis in her summation of the play says that Aphrodite hated Hippolytus for being *sōphrōn*. What kind of answer is this to Aphrodite's *mega phronōn*? Must we be reduced to Nurse's low regard for words? Have words no relation to things? Naturally enough Hippolytus seems *sōphrōn* to Artemis because he is, by his actions and attitudes, *sōphrōn* to her. And to Aphrodite he both is and seems the opposite. For a god, it is so if she thinks it so. But what are we to say of that part of the play which comes between the two divine epiphanies? How can we be comfortable with Artemis' single assessment of Hippolytus when we have seen him in both attitudes before the statues of gods and before the faces of men?

Artemis says too that the gods are not happy when worshipful men die, but the wicked (*kakous*), "we destroy with their children and their houses together" (1339-41). One god does delight in the death of Hippolytus, how then can he be called worshipful (*eusebēs*)? Further, it is not Theseus' line, nor Phaedra's, that is wiped out: their children survive, the legitimate children referred to in one of Hippolytus' last breaths (1455). But Hippolytus is the only and the last of the progeny of Theseus and the Amazon. It may be argued that he was, with his idiosyncrasies, unlikely in any event to have fathered children, even if Aphrodite had left him to complete his normal span; but consider the references to marriage which surround the messenger's speech, both in the third stasimon (at 1140-41) and in Artemis' promise (1425-28), and even a possible admis-

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Life/Death: honors after death ameliorate its effect; both Hippolytus and Phaedra are concerned with their continuing good name; but both long for permanence in this life; Theseus' life is lived partly in the past.
Active/Passive: in imagination, the bed-ridden Phaedra is more active than Hippolytus; each dies not long after his/her most strenuous activity.
Animate/Inanimate: Phaedra, Hippolytus, Theseus call on inanimate witnesses, as if they were alive.

[27] Lloyd, 31.

sion from Hippolytus himself that marriage is not out of the question at some future time (1083). Even in his violent denunciation of women, though he does—it is true—wish them out of existence, he does not say "may I never have a wife," but "may I never have a wife who is cleverer than a woman ought to be" (641). Aphrodite destroyed Hippolytus and prevented his producing progeny because (to her) he was *kakos*. Protest though we may, for we recognize him as the most virtuous of men, we find the word *kakos* predicated of Hippolytus again and again, and it is from his own lips that we hear it:

πῶς ἂν οὖν εἴην κακός; (654)
εἰ δὴ κακός γε φαίνομαι, δοκῶ τέ σοι. (1071)
εἰ κακὸς πέφυκ' ἀνήρ (1031, 1075, 1191)

Granted, these are conditions and questions, but in the last three, the apodosis of the condition comes true. In the former two, the possibility of Hippolytus' *kakia* is present in the minds of the persons addressed, Nurse (who hoped he was corruptible) and Theseus (who "knows" that he has been corrupted).

To Aphrodite not only does Hippolytus seem *kakos*, but he is so. Artemis, on the other hand gives him no responsibility in the tragedy. Our experience of the play makes us uncomfortable with both assessments. This is especially so because of the way Artemis expresses her conclusions: certainly Aphrodite did not in her own mind blame Hippolytus for being *sōphrōn* (1402, cf. 1339-41). In fact we know from her own words that in her mind he is *mega phronōn*. Now we have seen him being both, first serially (in the prologue) and then simultaneously (in the second episode), and we have heard him brag about his *sōphrosunē* before the man who thinks him capable of the most vile crimes. As audience we are interested in not only the speaker, of course, but the reaction of the hearer. Our reaction is shaped by the knowledge we share with both men, but more so by the truth of which neither is aware. Hippolytus' inability to see Phaedra, his forcing her to see herself among the *kakoi* drove her to her death and to the falsehood that forces him to use the word *kakos* of himself.

There are two *logoi*, as Protagoras said, concerning every *pragma*.[28] In the process of considering the contradictions inherent in things, men reach the truth about the world of phenomena, or at least they reach a truth which can be shared and understood in common. The gods of Euripides are not the measure of all things. Each of the gods of the *Hippolytus* is of one mind: each sees one side. Euripides, in the human action, compels us to see that there are two sides and therefore to see that the

[28] D. L. IX.51

same thing, person, action, or attitude, can possess now one qualifier and now its opposite.[29] He does this by attaching our sympathies to one character and then alienating us from the same character; he does it by turning the victim of the gods or of passion or of circumstance or of others' interference into an agent of destruction; and he does it by opposing the immutable world of the gods to the mortal world of change. The human characters of the *Hippolytus* are shown to be like their gods in their attempt to impose immutability on the human level through the various means of oath, curse, vow, prayer, suicide, the written word. Like the promises and threats and pronouncements of the gods, human words are *mēden mataion* (cf. line 46).[30] Second thoughts which in so many instances would save the situation (for example, at 612 or 891) are rendered impotent. In conjunction with the finality of such actions and words, the people imitate their gods by denying the contradictory nature of things, by trying to make their predications single and eternal. It is not the Olympian gods who are under attack in the play; if Euripides is attacking anything, it is the rigid idealism which rejects change and therefore rejects both life and wisdom.

Hippolytus furnishes the clearest example of such idealism with his perfect world in which there are only two categories of men and from which he excludes the majority of the human race. In his prayer for continued sameness, he rejects growth and thereby denies *phusis*. But Phaedra too creates an ideal world in which seeming and being are equivalent, and though she recognizes the possibility of shifting predication, the purpose of her final act is to make certain that her ideal view of herself continues its existence. This she can achieve by destroying the one person to whom she seems (and therefore is) opposite to her ideal view of herself. Theseus, dissatisfied with empiricism as it is, longs for a foolproof empirical method of telling friends from enemies and truth from falsehood, but rejects all the more traditional ways of knowing. What he does not realize is that there are already two voices and that he has closed his ears to one of them. By pressing the human world into the one-sided view of it displayed in the solipsistic world of the gods, the human beings shut themselves off from knowledge of human things in their essence which is change. While Phaedra is hanging herself the chorus sings of her life as Theseus' queen. They go back to the beginning and see her life as a piece, connecting the beginning, her initiation into the adult world, and the end: but this is only possible because her role and her life are over. Theseus can lament her as the perfect wife only

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[29] Kerferd (1981), Chapter VI.
[30] Luschnig, 92-4.

because he has failed to notice the change in her. He too connects the beginning with the end.

Why do we need a second goddess to tell us what we have already seen? Is it because Hippolytus and the chorus are under oath? Or because Hippolytus does not know all that went on in Phaedra's episodes and the chorus knows nothing that we do not know? It is not altogether unknown for a chorus to break a vow of silence, but we are fellow witnesses with the chorus. Theseus cannot remain in ignorance of his son's innocence: his tragedy would not be complete. But Artemis does more than relay information. By blaming Aphrodite for the tragedy, Artemis annuls human responsibility. She returns us to the simple, disconnected world of the gods. But we do not accept Artemis' monistic explanation.

The prologue and epilogue together form a frame which does not quite enclose the mortal world of the drama. In imitation of that world of the gods, the mortals, by accepting only one declaration (or predication) at a time, tragically fix their world *sub specie aeternitatis*, and thereby show its fragile, poignantly mutable nature.

But the divine frame does not quite enclose the play. There are those who find comfort in the final lines of the play when Hippolytus, after the departure of the goddess, releases his father from guilt for his death, and Theseus laments the loss of his bastard son. But even before this touching farewell, while Artemis is still present, the two men have a few lines together in which they ignore the goddess and feel sorry for each other and themselves. Here (1407-1414), the real understanding is reached. Only here in all the play is there anything like a profound sharing of knowledge between two characters. The word *sungnōmē* ("fellow-feeling, communion of knowledge, forgiveness", along with its paronym, *sungignōskein*) is used only three times in the *Hippolytus*, but its contexts make it significant.

The aged retainer suggests in his closing address to Aphrodite that Hippolytus should be pardoned (χρὴ δὲ συγγνώμην ἔχειν 117), because he is young. When we review Aphrodite's recent declaration, it is hard to imagine fellow-feeling between the goddess of love and Hippolytus.

In the powerful central scene, when Hippolytus is screaming his impassioned response to Nurse and she is trying to stop his mouth, she begs pardon (*sungnōth'* 615) and adds knowingly that it is natural for people to make mistakes.[31] Hippolytus replies with his famous tirade: there is no fellow-feeling here. And Nurse, with her admission that she has

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[31] Note that Artemis repeats this sentiment, 1433-4; see Vellacott, 230-6 on the theme of *sungnōmē*.

made a mistake, possibly coupled with a sensible suggestion that Hippolytus' conclusions may be mistaken, is rejected with the lot.

Finally, Artemis tells Theseus that he can find forgiveness (*sungnōmē* 1326) because of his ignorance (1334-5). Trite and unsatisfying though this is after what we have seen and heard, Hippolytus forgives his father, not because Theseus' act was excusable, but because his suffering is real.

Here finally there is real fellow-feeling. Hippolytus laments for his father's suffering and failure more than for his own pain and imminent death. He is not soft nor sentimental, but his own clear-sighted, if still uncompromising, self. He feels for his father's shame and guilt as only Hippolytus could. And finally he recognizes his father's passion and accepts it, "you would have killed me anyway [without the curse], you were so angry with me" (1413). These lines (1405, 1407, 1409, 1411, 1413) are true and spontaneous expressions of fellow-feeling: Hippolytus does not need the injunctions of Artemis to say them. Without Artemis, Hippolytus is able to forgive his father and share knowledge with him. Forgiveness is real in this little passage where the ideal world of the gods and of men like them is hushed by the communication of father and son. Forgiveness has no place in the immutable world of the gods where a word said is not in vain and hate is forever.

It is true that Hippolytus says he will hate women forever, but forever is not so long a time on the mortal plane. And his hate is annihilated in his last breaths by a new understanding. Whether or not Hippolytus is portrayed as capable of intellectualizing his new understanding—though I think he is, both in his shared knowledge with his father and in his seeing that it is possible for others to say *kakos* of him—he does come to know very directly Phaedra's plight in two ways. He finds his name denounced and himself unable to clear it with words. And he finds himself in the same place (on the same level of the stage) where Phaedra was at her entrance, barely able to stand, near death.

Perhaps the closest he comes to an intellectual understanding of Phaedra and of the world of shifting predications is when he says (1034):

> ἐσωφρόνησεν οὐκ ἔχουσα σωφρονεῖν...

Profound or nonsensical, Hippolytus' inchoate wisdom is more meaningful in our world of shifting predication than either Artemis' summary or Kupris' introduction, both of which trivialize the human world of change and the human longing to create a hedge against that change.

Κοὐκ ἀνώνυμος (1, 1429) are words used of Phaedra's love and of the Cyprian herself. The gods of the play need their names and their honors, but what are these gods more than names? Aphrodite claims credit for what we have seen and Artemis lets her have it. But causation is more

complicated in the *Hippolytus*.[32] Though the goddesses attempt to simplify it, even their words suggest the ambiguity of events and the interconnectedness of human lives. The messenger has no trouble accepting a double causation for the catastrophe (1166-8). The two punishments pronounced by Theseus, the curse of death and the sentence of exile, indicate a close cooperation between human and divine. Theseus, by exiling his son, sends him to a place where the curse can be effected. Even Aphrodite's explanation of how her plan is being put into operation implies that there is more to it than the simple statement that she is the author of the plan. The present state of affairs in Trozen is a complex mesh of relationships and prior actions. Can Aphrodite take credit for the presence of Theseus and Phaedra in Trozen? The line between freedom and compulsion is ambiguous. Theseus' violence affects Phaedra, increasing her suffering (37-9), but in another way fulfilling her desire. Can Aphrodite take credit for Theseus' temporary absence from home, a necessary part of her plan (cf. the repeated *ekdēmon* 32, 37)? Between lines 29 and 40 the goddess has changed subjects three times, hinting at complex human relationships. Artemis' summary assigns responsibility to Phaedra, Nurse, Theseus, and then carefully removes it, pleading either willed or involuntary compulsion, from herself and Poseidon. But she obliterates the human causation by saying that Kupris willed it so (1327, cf. 1400, 1434). On hindsight we realize that Aphrodite's prediction shows how little she knows outside her own world. We are better prepared to assess Artemis' declaration. But her words, like Aphrodite's, hint at a complexity in human affairs beyond the scope of either goddess.

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[32] Winnington-Ingram *passim*.

καὶ μιᾷ ἰδέᾳ δυνατὸς ᾖ
καθ' ἓν ἕκαστον
περιλαμβάνειν . . .

Plato, *Phaedrus*

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GENERAL AND THE PARTICULAR

ἀνθρώποισι δὲ
θεῶν διδόντων εἰκὸς ἐξαμαρτάνειν.
(1433-4)

Artemis tells Theseus that it is natural for human beings to go wrong under divine influence. She has herself already[1] assigned responsibility for the tragedy to a power higher than the men and women, thus considerably simplifying what we have seen as a complex series of interferences by individuals (free to act in any number of ways, as is clear from the number of times they change their minds[2]) in the lives of other individuals. Before she has concluded with her simplification, meaningful only in her world of deities struggling to maintain a balance of power and personality within their own confined world, Artemis' own words imply a multiple causation. For she assigns roles in the tragedy to Theseus (1287), to Phaedra (1300-1), to Aphrodite (1301-4), to Nurse (1305-6), to Hippolytus (1307-9), to Phaedra (1310-12), to Theseus (1315-17), to Poseidon (1318-19), and again to Theseus (1320-24). All these had an active part, and not only these. Artemis then moves the responsibility altogether to another plane when she explains the divine *nomos* and she describes the parts the gods have played in the plot: Kupris (1327), Zeus (1331), and finally her own impotent role in the disaster (1332-4). Only Artemis' role was passive, but it will not be so for long. Artemis' words at 1433-3 are, after all, a cliché (one that Nurse had already used, without gods, 615). She has gone through the particulars in her narration to Theseus. Perhaps she gives too many particulars to make this generalization very meaningful.

Artemis' generalization about human nature and the human tendency to ruin their lives is part of a pattern in the *Hippolytus*. All the characters make such generalizations, often with little regard to the special circumstances in which they find themselves.[3] For example: Hippolytus, who (as far as we know) knows no women, knows that all women are evil and that human life would be better off without them: they are one cause of men's falling into error. His old retainer, not the speaker in the

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[1] Barrett ad loc. (p. 413).

[2] Knox, 4-5 on the choices and changes of mind. But Knox believes that these are not free choices.

[3] Friis Johansen, esp. 126.

dialogue who happens to be on intimate terms with a god, knows how gods should behave. Phaedra generalizes at some length on the reasons that human beings fail, but is unable to abide by her conclusions. Nurse (who uses so many clichés that it is hard to choose a single typical example) believes firmly in the virtue of flexibility in word and act, but is so indissolubly attached to her mistress that she really has no life without her. Finally, Theseus knows the young and therefore sees no need to know the particular young man he must face. All these generalizations imply certain views about human nature. At times the generalizations arise from false divisions of things made by the characters, at other times they result from the breaking of legitimate distinctions.

Nothing can be more obvious than that the *Hippolytus* makes a distinction between men and gods. If nothing else, the framing device makes this clear as well as the preternatural catastrophe. At the risk, however, of belaboring the obvious, a look at the various views of human nature and divine essence is a useful preliminary to a description of the theme of the general and the particular in the *Hippolytus*.

Aphrodite, in the first two lines of the play, makes the contrast between mortals and gods (in her opening *men... te* clause), putting mortals first; but her words, though introducing a contrast, are also indicating a similarity. She then divides all of mankind into two types (3-6) and concludes with a general statement about the *genos* of the gods. The fact that mortals "enjoy being honored" (by their fellows, 8) is taken as a given (as *kan* implies line 7). Her distinction between *tous sebontas* and *hosoi phronousi mega* (5, 6) applies only to mortals. Although attached to her particular introduction of herself, her two lines of summary apply to all other gods as well. From the rest of her speech, in which she makes an example of Hippolytus as belonging to the second class of men, a number of general principles may be gleaned. Even Aphrodite views herself as function as well as person (cf. line 14 and her narration of Phaedra's falling in love). Hers is a theology—if gods can be said to have a theology—of power (cf. *Pollē*, 1 and 21-23). She has a hierarchical view of the universe (19), though only a dualistic one, and so makes no further distinctions among human beings, only that they are less than gods. For her, human beings are to be seen and defined primarily in their relationships: child (10, 51) wife (26, 36), father (25, 44). Poseidon, not Theseus, is called *anax*. These human relationships, emphasized by other references to the house, family, land, and lineage of the characters are, of course, a necessary element in tragic universality.[4] She gives a genealogy of Hippolytus (but notice that she simply calls Phaedra

[4] Kovacs (*Andromache*), esp. 82-4.

eugenēs[5], 26; her genealogy will come later, closer to her death): son of Theseus, offspring of the Amazon, pupil of Pittheus (his grandfather, 10-11). And she goes further back, naming Pandion and Kekrops and the descendants of Pallas. This is Hippolytus' heritage. And it is what he rejects in refusing to continue it and finding the process of continuing it an unnecessary evil (616vv.). Hippolytus is seen by Kupris as unnatural.[6] Birth, growth, death are human *phusis*. Hippolytus' birth and death are stressed by the goddess. But in between there is only his unnatural rejection and his more than mortal intimacy with a virgin goddess.[7] Aphrodite's prologue, then, emphasizes elements of human generation: men may be little more than names to her, but these names imply relationships and relationships are Aphrodite's function.[8]

Hippolytus enters leading a crowd from which he is soon distinguished. He is, after all, the *only* man of Trozen who thoroughly scorns the Cyprian. First he and then his followers sing of a benign and beautiful divine world, of caring and peaceful gods. The scene begins and ends in prayer, the first being a hymn of worship, the latter a petition, each singling out one man and one god. Hippolytus offers his oblation, a simple but special gift. His short speech of dedication, in which he presents not only a garland of greenery but himself, shows where he stands on human *phusis*. Innate virtue is better than acquired virtue (79). Human beings are of two kinds (79-81): *sōphrones* and *kakoi*. This is consonant with the last line of this speech, in which he juxtaposes the end and beginning of his life (*telos, ērxamēn* 87), but the growth/decay which ought to form the center of human life is omitted. Life for him is a whole, without growth or change.[9] From birth men are *sōphrōn* or they are *kakos*.

In the dialogue that follows, the two men talk about *nomos*. They make assumptions about the *nomoi* of the gods: that they are like those of men because the laws of men are god-given. Again this suits Hippolytus' belief in the stagnant life of man. This can be put more positively: Hippolytus lives in the eternal present, the only time at which he can be close to his changeless god. Hippolytus assumes that we can make choices among the gods and among men (104). And it would be possible, if Artemis' statement of divine *nomos* applied to men. He rejects (as Artemis does) those men and those gods who are not in his view *sōphrōn*. Both his anthropology and his theology are based on virtue (sanctity,

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[5] Barrett ad 26 (p. 159); Braund, 184-5; Knox, 18.

[6] But in fairness, Hippolytus' feelings about his own illegitimacy should be mentioned too (1083, 1452). He feels for his mother more than for any other human being (1082). Cf. Grube, 185.

[7] Barrett ad 17 (p. 157).

[8] Sale identifies Aphrodite as "the goddess who brings together", 41f.

[9] Crocker, 239-40; Hathorn, 213.

purity, chastity), not on power or societal relationship. In practice, he rejects the generic distinction, man/god. The older man takes a more hierarchical view of life, adding degrees of mortals (masters and slaves) and possibly equating masters with gods (88).[10] But where he most differs from his master is in his view of life as change and growth. He takes the traditional view of the young as being not yet fully formed and therefore excusable if they err through inexperience. Gods should be *sophōteroi*. His logic has failed: his master, he recognizes, is not wiser[11] than he. He undermines his construction of a sane and structured universe by giving advice to his betters at both levels. His advice goes unheeded by both: that, of course, is its dramatic purpose. In both men we see a breakdown in the division between men and gods (esp. at lines 88, 97-8, 104) which had been established and undermined as well in Aphrodite's speech (cf. 7). If we examine the two together, we conclude that gods like men demand honor, so that the servant is correct; that men and gods do have similar *nomoi*, so that Hippolytus is correct, though the epilogue will add an amendment; but that special worship paid to one god does not in fact exempt one from suffering at the hands of another god, or even at the hands of the same god. For Aphrodite is not one to put too fine a point on her construction (5, but cf. 48 and 468-9 and 721).

Both men show degrees of human independence from the gods: Hippolytus is convinced of human choice in matters of worship and of human perfection in imitation of (the best of) the divine. His servant sees human nature in need of *timaisin ... daimonōn chrēsthai* (107), but his chat with Kupris is more familiar than his studied approach to Hippolytus. He believes that he knows from himself and his observation of the world how the goddess ought to be. Still he fears for his young master: something is missing. Kupris is the name he gives to it.

Human life is in need of sustenance and so Hippolytus goes off to dine heartily (112).[12] Phaedra has her own way of denying life as we learn from the chorus' words on nourishment and death (135vv). In spite of the contrast in physical health, both are united by our knowledge that today they will both be dead.

The scene shifts. The chorus of young matrons has its distinct view of human life, at least of women's life (cf. 161-2). Theirs are questions and suppositions based on what sorts of disturbances are likely to happen to women, things that come either from the gods or from males. Help, too, can come from the gods (167-9). Life to them is somewhat precarious and influenced from without; only their sympathy with feminine suffering

[10] West, 156.
[11] And he certainly is not "more tolerant" as Conacher, 29 translates σοφώτεροι.
[12] Segal (1969) 298-9.

ameliorates the female world. The parodos emphasizes the outside influences on women's lives (*entheos* 141; *posin* 151; *naubatas tis... anēr* 155-6). Women, in general, in a group, are presented first through the chorus and then we are allowed to concentrate on the particular woman who shares with these women *dustanos amēchania* (162) but little else. For these women, in contrast to the lonely Phaedra, live in a community of equals, the only community in the play where sympathy and curiosity meet in happy harmony, but sadly rendered unable to act.

The first stasimon continues the emphasis on the interfering power of the gods, but shifts the focus to those particular two gods above all whose influence on human life has become so apparent, Eros and Aphrodite. Their examples of women ruined by love "bear in their detail no resemblance to Phaedra's case"[13] except that they end disastrously. But the chorus' examples, like those of Nurse, tell of loves that ended unhappily not for the lover but for the beloved. Nurse, not without cause, includes an example of a female carrying off the male beloved: in the analogy, Phaedra is to be the triumphant party.[14] Nurse is not concerned with the fate of Hippolytus, but only that she find a good *argumentum ad auctoritatem* for Phaedra's case. Love, after all, is or should be short-lived (cf. 253-7). The chorus on the other hand is concerned with the power of Eros/Aphrodite and not with the active partner in the pursuit. In the first example "Kupris *gave* Iole to the son of Alkmene"; in the second the male partner is not even named. Nurse's examples were of lovers who survived quiet nicely; chorus' of beloveds wedded in violence not so much to their lovers as to fire and ruin. In their song, the only active partner is Love itself (whether the Cyprian or her son). The humans and even the great Zeus are secondary.

The second stasimon begins by further removing human beings from the arena of responsibility. But sorrow drives the singers back to the palace and to Phaedra whose unhappiness they view as somehow removed from herself (773-5).

The third stasimon reflects a more thoughtfully religious chorus than does anything else they have sung. For this reason (at the risk of asymmetry) I tend to the view that there is a second chorus of Hippolytus' companions (addressed at lines 1099-1101 and referred to at 1179-80). The chorus up until now (*pace* Barrett *ad* 1102-10) has shown very little religious feeling; they have sung frequently of divine interference in women's lives, but only once of comfort from on high (168-9). They have suggested that the gods are worshipped in vain because they are less

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[13] Barrett ad 525-64 (p. 257).

[14] Eisner, 157-8.

powerful than love (535-7). Theirs is a theology of power and an anthropology of helplessness and generally futile prayer. Why should they be so shocked at the shift in Hippolytus' fortunes that they are led to doubt a previously held belief in caring gods who guide men's lives in a way that can be understood? Furthermore they have had a share in the undoing of Hippolytus. It is Hippolytus' men of the prologue who believed in benign gods. The main chorus' theology is in general closer to the view of heaven presented by the play's gods, but it shows less real piety and less religious sophistication than is expressed in lines 1102-10. The antistrophe is, however, more in keeping with the main chorus' views: they pray, as they have done before (166-9, 528-9), to be spared misfortune. Their *theothen... moira* (1111-12) shows once again their belief in divine control. There has been barely a hint previously in their songs of cooperation between human beings and the gods. Even their one prayer which is answered (166-9) is presented as a blessing from Artemis, not as woman cooperating with the goddess. But the words of the first strophe do imply a relationship between men's fortunes and their deeds (1006-7) which suggests a human-divine cooperation which—despite the gods' claims—is borne out by the play.

In the second strophe and antistrophe there is little to differentiate two choruses, except that in the antistrophe and epode there is a greater feeling of finality than a change of abode would require. The singers of the antistrophe and epode seem to know more than those of the strophe.[15]

The chorus' last song again expresses, in universal terms, the impotence of the human world in the face of the irresistible power of Love. It is a fitting conclusion for them to sing of the power that hovers through the piece, even though little love has been expressed by the actors. Phaedra's love certainly died before she did. Fitting too for the chorus who believes in the interference of gods to implicitly attribute the disaster to Aphrodite. Aphrodite could have written this hymn herself. In sum, the chorus believes in the power of the gods but has little faith in the human ability to act or even to share in responsibility. But even they do have a share in it.

Phaedra is remarkably different from these young matrons. She hardly mentions the gods, so sure is she of human responsibility and human potential (but cf. 241). She calls on Artemis once (228) and on Kupris once (415), but each only for confirmation of her own longings or her

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[15] Following Professor Barrett's injunction (p. 375) to those who divide the chorus, I would suggest that Hippolytus' companions of the prologue sing the two strophes and that the regular chorus sings the two antistrophes and the epode, with at least the epode sung after the departure of the men. Arguments about how long it takes to get from here to there in a tragedy are generally unconvincing. See also Halleran, 20.

own opinions. She uses Kupris as a synonym for her unwholesome desire (401, 725); twice she mentions gods as family relations (339, 683); and twice more mentions gods in set phrases (*pros theōn* 503; *tis an theōn* ... *ē tis an brotōn* 675). In view of the goddesses' versions of Phaedra's plight, it can be no accident that she is the least god-ridden of the characters.[16] This is not to attribute to her atheism or anything of the sort: she did build a temple to Aphrodite. In her view of human nature Phaedra clearly believes in human causation of events and human capability of dealing with them (whether successfully or not). She rejects the "transvaluation of values"[17] suggested by her Nurse by inveighing strongly against it. Although disgrace depends on knowledge she rejects the possibility of escaping notice if one does wrong. It is not the gods who find one out, but other men and other men who suffer from one's disgrace (428-30, 424-5). But in the end she does accept *kakon* as *kalon* and she does expect to escape notice. She knows that what she is doing is evil (728), but only in the particular, only to one life (721). Here she permits herself to judge her act not in itself, but with reference to its aim. Its general aim is *eukleia* (= *to kalon*[18]) for herself, her husband, and her children. Success finally is what counts for Phaedra as for her nurse (cf. 700). Does she succeed? At least, both Phaedra and Hippolytus are pronounced innocent of the same charge. But Phaedra, least of all the characters, would have accepted the divine interpretation of events. What is remarkable about Phaedra (in comparison to most of the other characters) is her confidence in the human intellect, her attempt to understand her own predicament, and to put it into perspective, and her (almost) uncompromising virtue. In only one particular does she destroy her construction. Once is enough.[19] And at her best Phaedra would concur.

Nurse, of course, is a firm believer in the priority of *phusis*, and something of an immoralist.[20] The two women set each other off. Where Phaedra holds to her inflexible standards, Nurse believes in flexibility in all aspects of human life. Consistency must not be required of her. In general she uses other than ethical standards to judge actions. *To ergon*, the saving of Phaedra's life, abolishes moral considerations (493-7, 501-

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[16] Lloyd-Jones, 147.

[17] Sinclair, 111.

[18] Claus, 232-3.

[19] Segal (1970), 281-3. On Phaedra's failure see Reckford, esp. 308-9 and 316ff.

[20] Antiphon the Sophist could not have outdone Nurse (P. Oxy. XI no. 1364 col. 1); Sinclair, 111; Morrison, 218ff.; Furley, 90-1. On Nurse taking over part of the role of Phaedra in the earlier *Hippolytus* see Reckford, esp. 315ff. Nurse is the liveliest and perhaps the most appealingly human of a type that intrigued Euripides. Her sophistries have certainly more redeeming social concern than those of Jason in *Medea*, the herald or Alkmene in *Herakleidai*, Lukos in *Herakles*.

2). Expediency is her criterion for action, success her criterion for goodness (700). She uses the gods to justify her rationalizations: they are much on her lips, but not until after she has learned the cause of Phaedra's illness. Until then, unlike the chorus, she does not suppose divine interference (except the general *hostis theōn* of 237), but suggests (316, 318, 320) likely, or at least possible, explanations for her lady's suffering (all things of which she has had experience in family life). But now, the improbability of her virtuous (358) mistress' love for her bastard stepson is such a shock to Nurse's sensibilities, that she attributes its origin to a god or something bigger if there is such a thing (359-60). For what is a god to Nurse except something she can use in an argument? After she has learned the cause of Phaedra's sickness she tries to win her lady's submission by repeatedly attributing the responsibility to the goddess (438, 443-58, 474-5, 476, 522). Having noted that love is too powerful an adversary, the fast-talking Nurse remembers (or so she claims) a cure. Phaedra is in too much agony to notice the inconsistency (cf. 504-6). Nurse, being unshackled from morals, has more confidence than even Phaedra in human resourcefulness (cf. 705). Above all, Nurse is a great equalizer. Love is universal on earth and in heaven too (we should note her similarity to Aphrodite in these sentiments). It is no use fighting it. But having succumbed we do have a built-in excuse. Her greater confidence in humanity's ability to squirm out of difficulties comes from her lower expectations (cf. 471-2, a commonplace but in character). Phaedra has greater expectations, and, what is more, she attaches moral value to the words *good* and *evil* as Nurse does not (*chrēsta* 471: cf. 380; *kaka* 471; cf. 378).

Theseus arrives after it is too late to do any good. His skepticism is equaled only by his ignorance. It covers both worlds. He adds the sentence of exile because he has no way of knowing whether his curse will be efficacious (890). His expectations of humanity are low indeed and declining. He has no confidence in human intellect and distrusts not only writing (954) but argument in general (955-7, 960). He expects the worst of his fellow men and goes so far as to suggest that there are those who are glad to share their homes and wives with adulterers: that there are men who prefer the company of bad men to that of good. It is as if his fantasy of a world just for the wicked is affecting his thought: he wishes he could banish his son to that other world, or at least beyond this one (1053). It is true, of course, that Theseus is in a passion and with good cause, but his generalizations about the state of humanity and its decline must reflect his opinion, if somewhat exaggerated, on these matters: the present calamity is an opportunity for Theseus to give his opinions voice. As far as the gods are concerned, he uses them as his wife does, but more

pompously, as confirmation of his thoughts and feelings (886, 940, 948, 951, 1169) and more efficaciously than his wife does, he calls on a god as kin. Although he suggests a *kēlis aphrastos* (820) when first struck by his loss, once he has read the message from his wife, he does not again refer to divine intervention: his progress is opposite to that of Nurse, whose love for her mistress led her to seek for and find an external cause. Theseus suggests a cosmic justice here (820) and only again when his son is maimed and near death (1171-2). The Kupris he mentions (at 969) is no more than a synonym for ordinary lust, not the overpowering mythic force Nurse uses as an excuse for her mistress. Theseus' anthropology is a decided contrast to his wife's. Phaedra believes in human knowledge leading potentially to the good, Theseus in the human intellect working for evil (955-7).

These then are the general theories of human nature and its relation to the divine expressed in word or displayed in action by the characters in the *Hippolytus*. They cover nearly all the possibilities from total dependence on a divinely ordered and controlled universe to a world in which the only meaningful action is performed on the stage of the human intellect. Each character has a model of the universe more or less carefully thought out which directs the way he or she acts. That these mental constructions affect our understanding of the outcome I hope to demonstrate in the following remarks.

Poetry according to Aristotle (*Poetics* 1451b), is *philosophōteron kai spoudaioteron* than history, because the latter treats *ta kath' hekaston* and the former *to katholou*. In tragedy, furthermore, the characters are given their real names (1451b) because what is known to have happened will be recognized as possible by the spectators. To a certain extent these names must represent types. But is it ever the playwright's intention to reveal "realities behind the mask"?[21] There is a tension in discussions of tragedy between the universal and the particular. Tragedy is "the exploration of the fateful situation and the character or characters that fit it."[22] These characters are Aristotle's *prattontes*, needed to perform the *mimēsis praxeōs* and they possess both *ēthos* and *dianoia* (*Poetics* 1449b). What is most important is the *praxis*, but the characters often engage our interest as much as the action. Can it be that Euripides calls attention to the anomaly of the man and the mask, the individual and the type, the particular and the universal? If so, this exploration is part of the *praxis*. And it is another side of the "intellectual experiment"[23] in which the dramatist invites his audience to participate.

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[21] For an opposing view see Kovacs (*Andromache*), 82-4; also Friis Johansen, 144-5.
[22] Cameron, 145.
[23] As Solmsen calls them.

The tension between the particular and the general exists within the play between characters and between the characters on stage and the audience. We are allowed a very private view of Phaedra certainly and possibly also of Hippolytus. We know how they spend their time offstage[24] and what their lives were like under normal circumstances. We have a glimpse of the *chronos* in which the present tragedy is the *kairos*.[25] But each is treated by the other characters as representative of a type and an alien type at that: Phaedra by Hippolytus as one with other women and therefore both useless and treacherous; Hippolytus by Theseus as a youth and therefore not only subject to overwhelming and illicit desires, but also worse than his father's generation, and by Phaedra in her final action as merely someone in the way of the plan to regain her lost *eukleia*. But we know too much about each of these characters to see them only with the other's eyes. It is possible that Theseus is a foil for the other two. He is a traditional character, not extending much behind the mask. The poet does not invade Theseus' private self. Nor do the other characters. He is only a relationship. Phaedra hardly speaks of him and then only in the most general terms (e.g., 408-9, 416, 420, 720). When she first mentions him, it is only after she is reminded of his existence by Nurse (*ekeinon* 321): a fine touch, for her whole physical, intellectual, and emotional being are concentrated elsewhere. An outraged Hippolytus speaks of his father because of his relationship to Phaedra and himself (660, 661). Theseus himself shows little or no intimate knowledge of the others[26] and perhaps we should expect none. Theseus also has to be reminded of his wife's existence (801). The problem is that we do have intimate knowledge of Phaedra and Hippolytus, given to us in their separate scenes. The classifications by type do not fit the evidence.

In the *Hippolytus* the uniqueness of the named characters is obvious. Hippolytus himself is singled out by his relationship with Artemis:

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[24] Hippolytus comes in from the hunt and the meadow; he leaves for a meal. Nothing happens in the house of which we are not made aware: Euripides is using the scenic conventions to good effect. "Every exit is an entrance somewhere else." The *Hippolytus* makes us painfully aware of this (as does the *Medea*) through the noises from within. At the end of his meal, Hippolytus is approached by Nurse. Phaedra hears his indistinct cries and reports them. After he has strutted and fretted on stage, he goes off to wash out his ears and watch for his father's arrival while she is hanging herself inside and once again we hear cries from the house. Theseus hears them too on his way home from the oracle. Hippolytus goes down to the beach; his entrance there is described in detail by the messenger. The mental space is enlarged. What is hidden from view is made known (cf. 593) by speech, direct or reported, or both (cf. 565-93).

[25] Cf. Hippocrates, *Precepts* 1.1,

χρόνος ἐστὶν ἐν ᾧ καιρός, καὶ καιρὸς ἐν ᾧ χρόνος οὐ πολύς· ἄκεσις χρόνῳ, ἔστι δὲ ἡνίκα καὶ καιρῷ.

[26] Theseus' only visible weakness is the "exclusion of otherness" according to Sale 65-6.

μόνῳ γάρ ἐστι τοῦτ' ἐμοὶ γέρας βροτῶν (84)

and by his rejection of Aphrodite:

μόνος πολιτῶν τῆσδε γῆς Τροζηνίας (12)

Phaedra's uniqueness is perhaps more implicit than explicit. Not her passion, but her reaction to it, her intellectualizing of it, makes her unique. Our surprise when we hear her 'great speech' tells us that she is different from other women of legend who find themselves in similar predicaments. She is different too from the other women on stage or in the orchestra. Theseus' position as hero and king, his view of himself, make him unique in the play's world, along with his *geras*: not to every man is it given to transform his will into action with a word. Any king, any father, can disown his son and drive him out of his house. But only these men are shown in such intimate cooperation with the divine.

The other characters, Nurse, the old servant, the messenger, are little more than types, without names, however many lines they have, however important their roles in advancing the plot, however much they contribute to our understanding of the situation and of the relationships among the people. What Nurse and Servant contribute most is their attempt to turn the others into types, to make everything common. Being types themselves they (not unlike Theseus) do not perceive the uniqueness of the others. They generalize. Hippolytus is not just another young man speaking from inexperience: he has renounced experience. Phaedra is not just another married woman in love with another man and looking for a way to avoid being caught in an affair. This is the importance of the servants: they clarify the theme of the general and the particular.

What of the gods? The ends of the play reveal them as two of a kind. Nor does Aphrodite make any distinction among gods on her own, though she quotes Hippolytus as doing so. Hippolytus distinguishes them clearly as *kakistēn daimonōn* (13) and *megistēn daimonōn* (16). Perhaps too fine a distinction.[27] Perhaps with these superlatives Hippolytus is missing the mark entirely. He is making a false hierarchy among the gods with which no one among men or gods would agree. The old servant implies as much (107). His is a religion of unity in plurality: all gods are more or less equal and more or less like men, only gods ought to be wiser; they ought to take into account such mitigating factors as youth and youthful fervor, distinctions which Kupris is clearly not prepared to make. The servant is not wrong in general though his details are off. Nurse too talks about gods and men as if they belonged to the same species. Everybody

[27] Berns; Braund; Sale, 35 ff.

falls in love, men and gods together, what is so strange about this case? But when she generalizes Phaedra's unique passion and trivializes her unique understanding of it, it is as much as to say that she cannot understand Phaedra, the path of whose thought we have been privy to. For if what Nurse says of the gods' love affairs is true, then she is also right in claiming that Phaedra wants to be better than the gods.

These examples form a pattern in the play. Not only the servants, but all the characters (human and divine) tend to make generalizations. This is in fact one of the ways the human beings imitate their gods in thought, word, and action.[28] It is also one of the ways in which things said by the characters contradict the actions on stage. The situation is paradoxical. The characters are trying to grasp the particulars, to put them into a coherent pattern through empirical analogy. They argue from probability (*eikos*), which implies the ability to comprehend the particulars by a single idea.[29] But Euripides forces us to see that what seems likely from the arguer's point of view is not in fact the case of the particular individual he is trying to comprehend.

Both Aphrodite and Phaedra are willing to sacrifice the individual to the general principle (compare 47-50 and 721, 723-31) and in so doing both also sacrifice one principle to another. At line 49 Aphrodite uses the generalizing plural *echthrous* to let us know that the individuals whose tragedies we shall see are no concern of hers.[30] That they are supposed to be our concern is made clear both by the rest of the play and by the fact that the goddess herself has already singled out Hippolytus as a unique individual in her own eyes and in Phaedra's. From the start Aphrodite juxtaposes the general and the particular. Other speeches are variations of Aphrodite's rhetorical form: the general statement, the particular example, the general conclusion. Aphrodite has divided mankind into two groups, the worshipful/the impious; friends/enemies. It does not matter to her that her point of reference in making this contrast is only herself. As it turns out the same destruction awaits the representative of each group. Her distinctions are real enough, but they are in conflict with her second principle, that the guilty will not get away with wronging her, a principle that is stronger than the advancement of those who honor her (as events and her own words show). The divine distinction has been muddied by the relationship between her friends and her 'enemies'. She cannot destroy her enemies without destroying her friends as well. The goddess' confusion (concerning which she spares not a second thought)

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28 Frischer; Kovacs (*CP*); Luschnig.
29 Plato, *Phaedrus* 173d-e.
30 Barrett, 166-7.

is set before us most clearly in her juxtaposition of *tēsd'* (48) and *tous emous echthrous* (49).

The speech is addressed to mankind in general, which explains why mortals are the reference point. It sets as the boundaries of Aphrodite's power and imagination the ends of the inhabited world (1-4), and then moves to a general statement about mankind (which it may be noted is not complete: for though Kupris may advance those who honor her, another of her kind may knock them down again), and beside it a general statement about the gods. From this she goes on to her particular example which is both personal and local, but still has scope, covering both time and eternity (*to loipon* 33). Geographically it focuses finally on Trozen but only after glancing at the spread of Athenian domain (30-1). Politically the present case is put into the context of the Attic dynastic struggle. The divine hand is evident (both in the name Poseidon and in the many first person references). For all this, not much is said about any individual. Nothing makes any character, even Aphrodite herself, more than just a well-known name. The goddess concludes her pronouncement with the general statement (48-50), sending us back to the beginning. She withdraws so that she will not share the stage with Hippolytus.

The hymn to Artemis which follows this portentous monologue puts her into an Olympian context, from which Hippolytus' prayer of dedication isolates her. She is no longer the loveliest of many, but the only one. His address to her is very particular and intimate in the local sense. The focus has narrowed from the vastness of Aphrodite's realm, to the expanse of heaven (confined by its golden halls) and at last to the tiny enclosed meadow. In his speech Hippolytus makes sweeping generalizations about humanity from which he (like Aphrodite) removes himself (84).

The pattern of the general and particular is repeated in the dialogue which begins with a general and somewhat abstract discussion of *nomos* as it applies to man's relation to god, then moves to Hippolytus' particular rejection and concludes with a generalization about the gods' relation to men. Hippolytus has already made the distinction on the mortal plane between those with *sōphrosunē* and the *kakoi*. In the dialogue he carries this distinction over to the divine plane when he says,

οὐδείς μ' ἀρέσκει νυκτὶ θαυμαστὸς θεῶν (106).

Hippolytus' relationship with Artemis coupled with his virginal way of life leads him to make distinctions and generalizations which the play proves inadequate. Not only is Hippolytus wrong in thinking that he can choose his gods, but he cannot even choose his mortal acquaintances. He is part of Phaedra's world. He fails to recognize her part in his life

because he has rejected the kind of family relationships which include her. He fails to recognize her virtue because he excludes women from the company of *sōphrones.*

Hippolytus misses an important part of his play. But when he does rejoin the action, it is to mouth the play's most pompous and outrageous generalizations, made more offensive by their juxtaposition to Phaedra's scenes which had been (as it were) an invasion of the intimate. Hippolytus' speech is the most irrational in the play. He wishes to deny knowledge not only to all women, but to himself as well, childishly, pitifully, thinking that he can wash away the knowing of what he has heard. He tears down all that Phaedra's rational speech had built up, more effectively so since he echoes her words. And he leaves her in an irrational state, perhaps half believing what he has said about her, since it is half true. In the midst of his generalizations, he does further divide women into types, all bad. Finally at line 651 he moves to the particular with *su g'*. Most of this speech is "general reflection" removed from any reality presented in the play that has application outside Hippolytus' own mind.[31] He begins with a rejection of sex in general, proves the uselessness of women and the bane of marriage by citing the custom of paying the bridegroom a dowry to take the bride and then he compares the two types of women: the clever and the stupid. He has finally reached a subject that applies to the situation; no one would deny that Phaedra is an intelligent woman. The application to action in each case is a fantasy: that women should not exist, that women should be isolated and prevented from speech. The second fantasy rounds off the general part of the speech, and he comes to his particular example (651) which begins and ends with personal references (*su* 651; *se* 662; *sēs* 663) to Nurse and Phaedra, and which includes what he plans to do about it, namely to wash out his ears (653), to keep silent (656-7, 660), to watch for his father's return so that he can see how the women will look him in the face (659-662). As in the other speeches there is a plan of action after the general statement. The speech concludes with a general summary and a final wish. Hippolytus leaves. He will not share the stage with these women; he will not be the one to teach them.

By including in his imaginary scenario (659-662) not only Phaedra, but Theseus and himself, Hippolytus does at last come close to the point, that it is (as Aphrodite's words suggests and Nurse's role intimates) the relationship among the three that forces them to be involved with one another, whether they will or no. The failure of all three comes from the

[31] Friis Johansen, 144-5.

attempt to exclude by building barriers made of generalized distinctions and fantasies of worlds without the others.[32]

Finally, Hippolytus must defend himself. He does this by using the play's clearest example of the argument from *eikos* (beginning at line 1008).[33] Having listed his own characteristics and thinking he has proved his simplicity, he says,

δεῖ δή σε δεῖξαι τῷ τρόπῳ διεφθάρην (1008)

and then proceeds to put arguments into his father's mouth and to answer them as if they were his father's arguments. Theseus has already done the same thing. The problem is, of course, the defect in the argument from probability. There is always the chance of a particular that does not fit into the general scheme. The audience is called upon to supply the objection, not a taxing requirement. It should be noted that Hippolytus' generalization about women is based on no particulars whatsoever, but on prejudice and misunderstanding. Theseus is by no means so ignorant about the young in general, but he is ignorant of the one exception.

Theseus in his tirade, like Hippolytus in his, takes a long time in getting to the particular. First he reflects on the wickedness and continued degeneration of humanity, and only at 943 begins his application to what he believes is reality. But what he is really doing is making general accusations, directed at all the things he hates and distrusts and attaching them to his son. What he plans to do about it begins at 973. At 980 he returns to the generalization by including his son in the category of *kakoi*. Similarly, in answering him, Hippolytus does not really present himself, but rather lists the virtues he admires and the failings he spurns and claims that he has or does not have them. He is prevented by his oath from making his applications more specific. Only another oath, with which he all but ends his speech, is strong enough evidence to balance both his first oath and his father's accusation. Unfortunately, his father's charge of religious hypocrisy nullifies Hippolytus' words. Deeds, results, not words are what Theseus values, and so what happened to his witnesses is the important thing, not the fact that they cannot speak in testimony. To Hippolytus, on the other hand, as to Phaedra, words are real. He recommends, therefore, verbal proofs and cross-examination (1055-6).

Οἶδ' ἐγὼ νέους (967), Theseus knows the young; he was once young himself; but he does not know Hippolytus. The servant, we remember,

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[32] Sale, Chapter 3.

[33] Finley, 9, 18, 31, 34.

had used Hippolytus' youth as a reason he should be forgiven; Theseus here uses it as probable proof of his son's guilt. From his general knowledge of youth and desire (both erotic and dynastic, for Theseus is a public man, a fact that makes Hippolytus' address to him as if he were the assembled people not so very incongruous) he makes up arguments for his son and answers these, speaking as if (*sois logois* 971; *phēseis* 962) he really were answering arguments instead of inventing them. Each has cut off the other's argument because each paradoxically knows both too much and too little. Theseus could no more believe in a virgin soul than Hippolytus could understand the torment of passion. These two fail in the crucial *agōn* because of their attempt from limited experience and equally limited acquaintance with the facts, to see the particular event in perspective. Hippolytus knows women; Theseus knows the young. We do not need to go outside the play to recognize that in the general scheme Hippolytus is wrong: not even Nurse is guilty of the vileness attributed to all women. On the other hand, we may accept that Theseus is in general right about the natural instincts of young men: Aphrodite did tell us that Hippolytus was the only man in Trozen without them. Each has a piece of inarguable (*atechnos*) evidence, though Hippolytus is unable to use his. Theseus' evidence is false, but the corpse is another *tekmērion*. Hippolytus was approached by Nurse, but even if he could say so, it is doubtful that he would interpret that evidence correctly because of his general construction. Further, once dead, Phaedra has become generalized (*nekron* 789, 906, 972; *nekun* 786). She no longer has any particular characteristics (not that she had had any earlier for either of the men, but for herself and for the women she had some distinctions). Her importance now is only one of status and relationship (mistress, wife, queen, mother). Before reading her letter, Theseus draws inferences regarding its contents based on what is probable, that it would have to do with either her status as wife or as mother of his children. His expectations are deceived. But the chorus is not deceived, nor are we.

The scene between father and son had started with generalizations and hardly goes beyond them. Theseus laments the human condition and appends a fantastic wish which like Hippolytus' earlier fantasy is threefold. These fantasies are illustrative.[34] They are reactions to the present circumstance based on each man's prejudice. Hippolytus moves from the most fantastic and negative (that women should never have been invented) to the most positive (though perhaps to him no less fantastic, cf. 921-2, 1034, that someone should teach women *sōphrosunē*); Theseus moves to the more and more fantastic (ending with the need for

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[34] Solmsen, 71-4.

a new world to house the unjust, in effect wishing them out of existence and beginning with a wish to teach sense to those who have it not). Hippolytus already knows that all women are evil. Theseus already knows that young men are subject to Kupris. Each has a piece of evidence (Nurse's overtures, Phaedra's letter) linking the particular woman or man to the general scheme. Their generalizations are a sign that they no longer see the particular, perhaps that they never could. This is made most pitifully clear in the debate by their inventing and answering arguments for each other.

These are not the only places where characters make inferences about others' thoughts, motivations, actions. Nurse, for example, on the basis of probability imputes to Hippolytus dynastic ambition (305vv) which is not a concern to Phaedra in her self-absorbed private imaginings until Nurse reminds her of it. Although this charge is refuted by Hippolytus, he does think it is expected of him. Hippolytus believes Phaedra to be the originator of the plan to seduce him and does not realize that Nurse in swearing him to secrecy was concerned, probably above all, that Phaedra not find out what she has done. Nurse, believing that nothing can be more valuable than life, misunderstands her mistress throughout, especially when she says "it would be a different story if I had succeeded" (700-1). Phaedra—taking her cue from Hippolytus' tirade (and from her own denunciation), in which he says that he both will and will not keep his oath, while breaking it unknowingly because he assumes that Phaedra already knows what he has sworn to keep secret and in which he says he will watch her face when Theseus comes home (which she knows she cannot bear)—assumes that Hippolytus will tell his father what seems to be the truth (690) and is close enough to the truth to rob Phaedra of the will to resist (cf. 317). Most pitiful are Theseus' assumptions after the disaster, that Poseidon is his father (1169-70) and that the punishment is proof of Hippolytus' guilt (1265-7).

The scenes between Nurse and Phaedra brilliantly interpose the general and particular, the public and private, the individual and dynastic. The parodos reestablishes the pattern (already set in the prologue) by shifting the focus to the private world of women, but never forgetting that it is their queen whose life is at stake. The song, after giving the general female context, moves to the particular, to Phaedra's private life (fasting and hiding) and then to generalities about women's condition. At the last they compare their queen's situation to their own. Notice, too, how they move from the physical and external (fasting, clothing, bed) to what is most intimate and internal, the will. After the entrance of the chorus, Nurse opens the first episode with a speech beginning *ō kaka thnētōn* (176), which gives her character in brief, sets the tone

for her future philosophizing. Then she moves to her particular remarks addressed to Phaedra (*s' egō* 177) and concludes with a generalization on life and its troubles. Throughout this part of the scene Phaedra is completely self-absorbed: even her generalizations are personal. Nurse does little more than speak in maxims:

πολλὰ διδάσκει μ' ὁ πολὺς βίοτος (252).

What indeed has her long life taught her other than to utter apophthegms and to believe them? Nurse's speeches are full of cliché (e.g. 186, 189-90, 197, 207, 252-266, 435-6, 439, 465-6, 471-2, 474-5, 476, 480-1, 615) which she equates with wisdom.[35] But clichés like the other generalizations do not take individual circumstances into account. And other general truths can be opposed to them, as when Phaedra says (426-7):

μόνον δὲ τοῦτο φασ' ἁμιλλᾶσθαι βίῳ
γνώμην δικαίαν κἀγαθήν, ὅτῳ παρῇ,

a piece of common knowledge (*phas'*) unknown to Nurse. Nurse's utterances like *kai xumphēsousi sophoi moi* (266) and *k'an brotois* (435) are a signal that the details are out of focus for her. Nurse's actions and responses are conventional. And Phaedra begins to open herself to them and invite Nurse to expand on them when she begins to generalize her love, *ti touth'... eran* (347).

Phaedra's great speech is a masterpiece of the general-particular polarity. It is personal if compared to the other long speeches (Aphrodite's, Hippolytus', Nurse's, Theseus'; that is, it applies to her own life more than the other speeches do). Whereas Hippolytus and Theseus make sweeping generalizations which reflect their prejudices and their anger, and Nurse seems to be composing arguments *ex tempore* with very little reflection or self-appraisal, Phaedra tells us that this speech arises from long internal dialogue. The negatives (e.g. 377, 387, 389, 402) point to rejected possibilities whether in argument or action. She tends to personalize abstract thought: that is, she begins with a personal reference (375) and moves to the general statement (376vv.) on the life of mortals and then back to herself and her own thought, emphasizing the fact that it is her own thought (388), showing a positive view of her intellect and confidence in her conclusions (391). Hers is not jejune philosophy, removed from the sphere of particular acts. Whether her conclusions are right or wrong, at least they apply to her life and intentions. She tells the steps of her plan, mixing in general truths about the

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[35] Cf. lines 90, 266, 465, 643, 700, 988: Hippolytus, too, is given to citing "the wise."

viciousness of the tongue. After further generalizations about adultery, she returns to herself (at 419) and once more to generalizations, this time about the social value of a good reputation. They are apt and applicable generalizations. For it is these truths that are killing her. At the end of it all she surrounds the imaginary young woman looking at herself in a mirror, a personal, intimate, image, by Time and a latent proverb. Time holds the mirror. Time brings the truth to light. Her own plans are the application of her general reflection, to which she returns with the final image and the application to herself in the final agonized words, "may I not be seen among them." Phaedra is a prisoner, not only to the walls and ceilings of her chamber, but to the words said about her, whether they come from others or from her own lips. Time and the words that will be said surround the self-absorbed *parthenos*. The words she has said about herself are answered by those of Nurse and Hippolytus. Phaedra needs new words (688) and she finds them (716).

Nurse answers this great speech with one of her own, full of home-truths about the mortal condition and about the gods, reducing Phaedra's plight to a commonplace, *sun pollois brotōn* (439), and incidentally breaking down the distinction between men and gods (as indeed Aphrodite herself had done). Having turned Phaedra's passion and pain into a universally shared (and therefore in this instance trite) experience, Nurse mocks her mistress' struggle and decision by suggesting its logical conclusion (440-1). She uses mythological analogies, thinking that she has worked our parallels to Phaedra's case. But has she? These gods survived love affairs. Nurse is suggesting arguments for Phaedra to use afterwards, should she be caught consummating her love. But Phaedra has already cursed the first woman to have carried on an illicit love affair and is not looking for excuses. Survival with disgrace is unthinkable for Phaedra. To do the deed is disgraceful (405), to be thought to have done it or desire it is disgraceful (687), even to think about it is disgraceful (317). Nurse's speech is manipulative, but it fails to take into account Phaedra's idiosyncratic view of *duskleia*. Nurse moves to the particular, accusing Phaedra of being unable to live like other human beings (459vv.), accusing her, too, of trying to be better than the gods (474-6). Nurse is right. In the sphere of action, Nurse intends something, but what she intends is obscure (479-81 and especially 508-12). It has been a breathless speech, full of short sentences in which Nurse seems to be racking her brain for the only kind of evidence she knows and trusts, general truth, in quotable form. When Nurse tries her clichés out on Hippolytus, it does not work:

ἁμαρτεῖν εἰκὸς ἀνθρώποις, τέκνον (615).

This is her last line before Hippolytus begins his tirade. Perhaps we should remember this reaction when we hear the words repeated.

When Artemis, aping Nurse's words, sums up the tragedy by saying,

ἀνθρώποισι δὲ . . . εἰκὸς ἐξαμαρτάνειν (1433-4),

it is the flaccid conclusion of this constant tension between the particular and the general. It adds little to our experience and little to relieve the suffering of Theseus and his son. Of course the use of generalities is a convention in tragedy. But that fact alone cannot explain or make light of the use to which Euripides puts that convention in the *Hippolytus*. What is left is the inarguable (*atechnos*) shared experience of unique persons which cannot be reduced to cliché. The effect of the pattern is to force the audience to focus on the anomaly that the very attempt to understand and to provide a general context is partly the cause of the tragic misunderstanding of the individuals who share the fateful situation. The generalizations are a kind of blindness: they signal an unwillingness or inability to see the individuals who are encompassed by the group. The audience is involved through the shock of hearing favorite clichés used so ineptly. How many men in the audience might agree in general with Hippolytus' view of women's wickedness? How many with Theseus' picture of the younger generation? But they must see that the application is wrong. The audience participates in this adventure in *logoi* and so is saved from the ineptitude of the solipsistic (solipsistic because, though they seem to be directed to the world outside, in fact they reflect only the speaker's idiosyncratic view of things) generalizations made by each character in turn. Characters in tragedy frequently speak in generalities. But Euripides puts this convention to original use.

εἰ καὶ κατάληπτον ἀλλὰ
τοί γε ἀνέξοιστον καὶ
ἀνερμήνευτον τῷ πέλας...

Gorgias

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

μαθεῖν ἔραται ψυχή. (173)

The chorus greets Nurse with these words. No one on stage (except the victim) knows the cause of Phaedra's illness, but we know. This chorus of Trozenian women finally comes to know from the action as much as the audience knows from the prologue. But at the crucial moment they must deny that knowledge to Theseus (804). There is much talk about knowledge in the *Hippolytus*, about how we know[1] and especially about what we know, and much regret of what we cannot know. And yet surprisingly, unlike the *Oedipus*, the *Hippolytus* has not usually been considered by the critics[2] as a play having knowledge as one of its major themes. Ignorance is a necessary condition in the *Oedipus*. But is it not also in the *Hippolytus*? Obviously Theseus would not have killed his son if he had known the truth. Τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι, says Artemis, "your ignorance excuses your error of malice" (1334-5). Ignorance allows Oedipus to commit his crimes and continue living them in innocence (though perhaps not perfect innocence[3]). But can the same be said of Theseus, Hippolytus, Phaedra, Nurse? A constant feature of Oedipus is his pressing on to know from which he never retreats until he knows all. In the *Hippolytus*, the desire to know is shared among the several major speakers, but with it there is a fear of knowledge, a desire not to know, which Oedipus experiences (ambiguously) only at the end of his tragic quest. The theme of knowledge and ignorance is not concentrated in one person as in Sophocles' play; it is less single-minded in the *Hippolytus* than in the *Oedipus*, but it is no less truly there. The getting of knowledge is by no means an advance from which there is no retreat. But that is part of the pattern, an all too human pattern. Knowing is painful; but

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A small part of this chapter has been published under the title "The Value of Ignorance in the *Hippolytus*," *AJP* 104 (1983), 115-123.

[1] How we know (in the play's terms) is one of the subjects of the next chapter. In brief, knowledge is gained in the play by revelation, hearsay, reason, received truth, experience, intuition, question and answer, innate awareness.

[2] On the other hand, much of the finest criticism of the *Hippolytus* treats the matter implicitly. Knox's wonderful piece on speech and silence is probably the best example; others include the work of Hathorn, Sale, Winnington-Ingram, Solmsen, Berns, and most recently Zeitlin.

[3] Cf. Cameron, 125ff.

ignorance cannot heal the wound inflicted by knowledge. Ignorance is not wholly—perhaps not at all—a matter of the will.

Every character in the *Hippolytus* talks about knowledge. Everyone who acts at all acts in ignorance. Hippolytus insolently, but also naively, snubs Aphrodite. He is totally unaware of Phaedra's character. He is caught unawares by Nurse in her hurry to make him swear not to tell what she is about to communicate. When it would help him and others to ask questions, he neglects to do so. All this is in addition to his "existential ignorance."[4] Nurse, in spite of her long life and her lifelong association with Phaedra and her family, is incapable of grasping the concepts of honor and *to kalon* so dear to her betters. Phaedra knows so little about Hippolytus that she thinks him capable of intentionally breaking his oath. She acts, furthermore, as if she were forgetful of her principles so carefully outlined in her speech on knowledge and action. Theseus, finally, misses everything except the results. He is misled, of course, first by the chorus and then by his wife. A belief in results above all is characteristic of Theseus' intellect.

If only the truth were known at the right time, the tragedy would have been avoided. And these are not truths that need a clairvoyant to discover them. Rather they are present in the minds of men and women on stage in each scene. It is true that the truth is tampered with, but other ways of finding out are constantly suggested and even displayed. It is true too that a multiplicity of truths is presented in the play, but even the most intransigent character shows himself gradually capable of grasping that shift in perspective. The play presents, with many subtle variations on the theme, the failure of the human search for knowledge, but perhaps not a total failure. There is no murderous hatred in the human action against which no truth or pity can prevail (as in *Agamemnon*, the various *Electras*, *Medea*). There is no tendency to violence which must find victims on whom to vent itself (as in *Orestes*, *Medea*, *Heracles*, *Hecabe*). There is no pitting of right against equal right with no solution short of violence (as in *Antigone*, *Oresteia*, *Prometheus*). The murderous hatreds we see (Phaedra's, Theseus') are temporary: they were once love. Hippolytus deals with his permanent hatred of women, not by violence, but by isolation. Even to Phaedra the destruction of Hippolytus is secondary to her desire to unravel the knot of knowledge that has trapped her. Everyone acts in ignorance. Why then is Artemis' answer (of lines 1334-5) so unsatisfactory? Partly because everyone talks about knowledge.

The prologue is free of the longing to know, quite the opposite in fact. Aphrodite knows as much as she wants to know, as much as she is

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[4] Sale, Chapter 3, Crocker, 240.

capable of knowing. Both gods can omit what it does not please them to know and for them it does not exist (within certain confines that apply in their divine world, cf. 1328-30). This explains Artemis' omission of Hippolytus from an active role in his drama. Not so for the human characters: Hippolytus does not know and knows that he does not know.[5] But try though he might, he cannot exclude the knowledge of what he thinks is evil. In the second part of the prologue, the talk about knowledge focuses on the negative aspects of it. It is a quest for ignorance. Ignorance has its value in the *Hippolytus*. But the quest for it is as futile as the utopian wishes of the men and women in the play. As soon as one says, "no, I do not want to know," it is a signal that the speaker already knows (or thinks he or she knows) more than he or she wants to know. The request "pretend not to notice" or "do not wish to know" can be either a plea for forgiveness or a suggestion that hypocrisy is called for.[6]

The old servant asks Hippolytus if he knows the *nomos* that pertains to mortals. "No," says the young man truthfully (91-2). How could he know what he has not yet heard? The conversation moves along until the old man finally makes his specific suggestion and Hippolytus his rejection. The young man leaves and the old one talks to the goddess; no teacher wants his instruction to be ignored. "Pretend not to hear," he tells the goddess (119). *Sungnōmē* (117) here depends upon willful ignorance.

Hippolytus shows a lack of curiosity throughout (cf. 1004 vv. where he puts into words his lack of curiosity). He rarely asks questions on his own other than rhetorical questions, until he asks his father what is wrong and begins to question his own part (cf. 933). Lack of curiosity is a species of willful ignorance. In their scene together the old servant does the questioning, Hippolytus gives the answers. Aphrodite has given answers too. If Hippolytus displays little natural curiosity, not so the chorus. The young matrons are so inquisitive that they do not even wait for the presence of Nurse and Phaedra to begin their questioning and they do not desist until they have persuaded the willing Nurse to do her all to get at the truth (282). Their curiosity, like Nurse's, is not idle, but tempered with sympathy and a hope of being able to help. Hippolytus' lack of curiosity turns out to be a moral flaw: because he does not let himself know, he cannot show fellow-feeling. The changes in both, Hippolytus' beginning to wonder, the chorus' refusal to share knowledge will be considered below.

The polarity is displayed in action by the entrance of the chorus and the scene that intervenes between the hero's first and second

[5] Cf. Hathorn, p. 213 "[Phaedra] knows, knows she knows, chooses not to know..."
[6] Fitzgerald esp., 34-36.

appearances. The first movement is a rejection of knowledge; the second concentrates intensely on the getting of knowledge in a literal sense. Aphrodite had told us that not one of the servants knew what was wrong with the queen. We are presented with not only one servant, but a whole chorus of local women eager to find out what we already know. Our attention is focused on the ways of finding out, on the reasons for silence, on Phaedra herself and how, given her role in the first *Hippolytus*, she can be called *eukleēs*.[7]

Phaedra's part in this scene is crucial. It is not only that she is the center of everyone's curiosity. But her part, first in hiding and then in declaring her secret, is in itself revealing of what we do not know from the prologue. Since we already know why Phaedra is unhappy, we are not particularly curious about the answer to that question. Therefore other things are revealed to us through the medium of chorus' and Nurse's importunate curiosity and through Phaedra's ability in delirium to speak and conceal at the same time.

Phaedra's delirium lets us know what it feels like to be in her condition. What she says makes no sense to Nurse or chorus, but it does make sense to us. She makes us share in the pain of knowing. Her lyrical passion ends with the first clear cry against knowledge (247-9). Better to die in ignorance! It hurts too much to understand! Euripides does not present this polarity for our intellectual delectation only: he makes us feel it. We share knowledge with Phaedra. We feel for her. Every adult knows something of what she is suffering: this sets in relief the immaturity of Hippolytus who denies this part of life. Her silence about it, her refusal to give in to it, her shame that in fantasy she has given in: all these assure us that she is *eukleēs*. The more Nurse fails to understand, the more by contrast do we understand. Hippolytus has rejected this kind of intimate knowledge of other human beings. But we feel for him too, most of the time, because of what he does not know: that his life is almost over. Phaedra's is too, but she knows it well.

Knowledge and ignorance are juxtaposed by the change of scene and within the scene. But soon enough the concentrated efforts of Nurse, encouraged by the chorus, overseen by Kupris, bring out the facts. And Nurse in her turn understands the pain of knowing (353-61). Like Phaedra she reacts to the knowledge by wishing for death. Phaedra had told her so, "evil for you to know, evil" (327). It is not hard to forgive Phaedra for telling the secret. How could she, under the pressure put upon her, pressure having to do with knowledge and honor, long have

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[7] Winnington-Ingram, 173ff. See on "Phaedra 1 and Phaedra 2," Reckford, esp. pp. 309-319 and Zeitlin, esp. 52-58.

refused (330, 332)? What we witness is the sharing of knowledge. We have not found out any facts we did not know, but certainly we have not been bored by this scene. We have shared with the characters the pain of knowing.

Nurse spends her first scene trying to find out, talking about how hard life is, and lamenting her inability to get at the truth. Her whole life is a question. She values her experience because it gives her answers. Nurse's role is raised a little above that of an interfering busybody with a commonplace answer for everything by her quest (short-lived though it is) for the ultimate answer. She is seeking for what other characters have somewhat arrogantly found, the meaning of life (191-7): what is it here that we love; what is there after? Her job is hardest of all. She suffers a sudden reversal (353vv.). The new knowledge is devastating; it cancels out the old need to know, the old knowledge and the old wonder. But Nurse can take even this grievous setback in her stride. She is called upon to find a new answer. And she does (471-2). Very quickly, we may add. Her answer is a balance of goods and evils.

Meanwhile Phaedra has delivered her long speech. She does not tell explicitly how we know what is right. It seems to be by a kind of labelling process, requiring the acceptance of traditional values. The good and just *gnōmē* she values so much (426-7) would then be the means of distinguishing *ta chrēsta* from *ta kaka*. She is not one to accept a balance of moral goods and evils. One thing is not clear, the *kairos* (386); and this is not a minor scruple on her part. For it is here that we find the heart of the relation between knowledge and action with which Phaedra is concerned.[8] It is the *kairos* that determines what label will be applied to a choice of action. *Aidōs*, though sometimes painful (243-4), is one of Phaedra's good things. She respects Nurse's supplication (335) and is taken in by the old woman's talk about honor and knowledge (330, 332), but with misgivings (395-7). Phaedra grasps this essential problem of the *kairos* which has everything to do with the question of knowledge of the good. We know what is good, but we do not accomplish it because the steps to reaching the goal (doing the appropriate thing at the appropriate time) are not as clear as the goal itself.[9]

Despite the pain of knowing and the need to keep others from knowing, Phaedra herself refuses not to know (388-90). The faculty that distinguishes right from wrong is her most esteemed possession, even if it cannot always predict the appropriateness of an action which in itself

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[8] *Kairos* is "the instant in which the intimate connection between things is realized," Untersteiner, 111; cf. 120-124 on Gorgias' concept of the tragedy of knowledge; see also Kennedy, 64.

[9] Manuwald, 145; see also Dodds, 103.

may be morally neutral (*ou kakē*) but in the long run may turn out to be ruinous (*achthos oikōn*). The *kairos* is uncertain, but not so the *chronos* (428-30). To Phaedra failure in general is not so much a question of choosing to do what is evil (although some do so choose), as of either not taking the effort to work out the problem (a sin of omission of which she herself is not guilty until she has made her last discovery at 716) or of failing to see that a particular choice of a good may be inappropriate and lead to a taint on one's reputation. This is not a failure of *gnōmē*.

This speech shows Phaedra to be a serious person who thinks about the ways of recognizing and achieving the traditional moral values. Nurse's speech with its dazzling array of terms of value (435-6, 445, 465, 474, 477, and in the dialogue, 500-3, 511-12, 521) and its shocking mockery of what Phaedra holds dear (esp. 459-72, 500-3) is confusing to the young woman. Some of it Phaedra rejects out of hand, but Nurse's final promise (510-12) is irresistible.

The theme of willful ignorance begins to take over in Nurse's speech and holds the floor until the debate between Theseus and Hippolytus. The juxtaposition of this theme to that of longing for knowledge, Nurse's and chorus' need to know, Phaedra's estimation of her power of knowing, raises it above the level of cliché, the medium in which it finds its expression. Nurse suggests that it is possible, even beneficial, to pretend not to know (466): this is her answer to Phaedra's concern about the hurtful aspects of knowing (424-5). With her admonition, "wish to be cured, not to understand" (517), Nurse tries to hide her intention by setting up a good (to be cured) in opposition to knowing. She stifles Phaedra's question (517, 519, 521). Hippolytus, once approached by Nurse, has no questions: natural lack of curiosity, moral indignation, an inclination to judge harshly what is alien to him combine to blind him. He has answers, all fantastical and puerile. He would prevent evil from becoming known by keeping women from speaking (645-8). He will purge away his knowledge by washing out his ears (653-4).

The chorus swears to keep silent what they have heard. Hippolytus has already sworn. Although the two oaths come close together and concern similar things, there are some interesting differences. Hippolytus' oath is taken from him *aphraktos* (657). When he makes the promise, he does not know what he is swearing to keep secret, and would not have taken the oath had he known. But the chorus does know. They have seen and heard everything. Their oath is taken with full sympathy for Phaedra. It is taken willingly and with knowledge. Still the consequences of the two oaths are similar. Neither the chorus nor Hippolytus can speak. They are forced to confine the knowledge within themselves, to, in effect, pretend that they do not know and to do away with the consequences of

knowledge. This fact forces the chorus to cry out in vain and Hippolytus to argue from probability rather than fact. Knowledge to Phaedra is what brings disgrace. She expertly changes what is to be known. She invents the truth (cf. 688vv.). The chorus of women is prevented from bringing Phaedra's disgrace out of doors. Hippolytus had wished women to be bound to silence so they could not spread evil (650). He changes his theme in the face of his father's rage.[10]

The longing for knowledge and the rejection of it meet in the person of Theseus. He wishes for clearer knowledge than is usually possible through a fantastical mechanism whereby all unjust men would automatically betray themselves. But he himself has already made up his mind what to believe so that he really has no use for his device, and he rejects more traditional modes of inquiry that are suggested to him (1058-9, 1051-6). His son, who would not take the trouble to ask questions in his scene with Phaedra's Nurse, now must reverse himself and become the one to wish (with much more sincerity than his father does) for ways of knowing and making known, ways of correcting not his own, but his father's ignorance (1023-4, 1051-2, 1055-6, 1074-5, 1078-9; and cf. 1192). This is a different Hippolytus than the one who appeared before Phaedra and her Nurse.

Theseus, who mockingly rejected *elenchos* when it might have done some good, once his son is fatally mangled, suggests cross-questioning him (*elenxō* 1267). The event has proved him guilty and Theseus believes in results. The significance of Theseus' rejection is brought out by Artemis: Phaedra feared *elenchos* (1310); Theseus did not undertake an investigation (*ouk ēlenxas* 1322); Phaedra took away the means of investigating (1337). Artemis has managed to make Theseus both responsible and not responsible. The pain of knowledge reaches its climax in Artemis' scene (1297, 1313-14). Knowledge hurts. Ignorance has its value (1334-5).

Ignorance is a common, if not universal, dramatic device. Without it we could have no recognition, no irony, no suspense in tragedy or comedy.[11] But it would be hard to find a play in which so many people display or claim so many levels of ignorance of so many different things as they do in the *Hippolytus*. And yet all the characters who tamper with the plot are so sure that they do know that they stake their lives, future, honor, and happiness on that certainty.

τὴν δὲ σὴν ἁμαρτίαν
τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι μὲν πρῶτον ἐκλύει κάκης,

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[10] Cf. Knox, 16. on Hippolytus' reversal in begging the house to speak for him.
[11] Duckworth, 140-142.

says Artemis to Theseus (1334-5), "your ignorance frees your error of malice." We have looked at the passages in which the actors express, sometimes passionately, their longing for knowledge and at the places where these same characters reject knowledge. Let us turn now to their claims of ignorance. What effect does all the talk about knowing have on our interpretation of Artemis' godly wisdom?

Let us begin with Hippolytus whose profound ignorance of the way things are has been called an "existential crime."[12] In his exchange with his attendant, after agreeing to take good advice and modestly placing himself among the *sophoi* (90), Hippolytus answers his servant's second query with the words that he will repeat at intervals throughout the play.

> Οἶσθ' οὖν βροτοῖσιν ὃς καθέστηκεν νόμος; (91)
> οὐκ οἶδα... (92)

The stichomythic convention encourages this kind of question and answer.[13] But the fact that the Hippolytus' response is conventional does not prevent its being significant. The young man is forced to say *ouk oida* about a very important matter. Hippolytus does not know what his servant is asking about, but he also fails to understand the *nomos* once it is explained to him. As it turns out the servant is getting at the connection between men and gods in which the link is *nomos*.

> Do you know the law which is established for mortals? (91)
> I do not know...(92)

Hippolytus' response is both conventional and telling: Hippolytus is aloof, ignorant of human behavior, unsympathetic to human passions, ignorant too of the ways of the gods and of what is owed to them, in spite of his special treatment by Artemis and his justified claim to special knowledge and inimitable virtue. This becomes immediately clear from his rejection of the servant's advice. He is mistaken too about Artemis: she did not or could not protect him (60; cf. 1328vv.). Paradoxically this exchange between the young man and his servant shows Hippolytus to be at the same time both modest and arrogant.

The attendant in his turn goes too far. Although he correctly assumes that deference is owed to the gods, he is led to the further assumption that the gods are wiser than men, which rarely, if ever, is the case in Euripides (120). In the event, the gods are not "wiser": their understanding is partial and their ability to act on the knowledge they have is limited. It must be said on the other hand that Aphrodite's destructive manipulation of the intimate connection among these characters and between them and

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[12] By Crocker, 240.
[13] Barrett ad 91.

events is masterful. Hippolytus shrugs off the older man's advice; for Aphrodite second thoughts are out of the question. Too much is at stake.

Besides his deep emptiness in understanding human modalities and the relationship between men and gods and his lack of direct knowledge of passion and psychic pain, Hippolytus displays the various levels of ignorance at work in the play. Of what else is he ignorant? He does not know (56) that the gates of Hades stand open for him. Now on the shallowest level, obviously Hippolytus does not know that he will die today; and as far as the relation of knowledge to action is concerned, it is irrelevant. On the other hand, Hippolytus does reflect the goddess' observation with his prayer to remain forever as he is (87): what is changelessness in the human condition if not death?

In his second scene where he makes his worst mistakes, Hippolytus is most sure of his intellectual grasp of the situation. But when he returns, having presumably watched for his father's return, he makes his second claim of ignorance (904). This is a simple case of want of facts such as all the characters suffer at one time or another. And he sees at once (905) the cause of his father's lamentation. Even so he is still very much in the dark and his father's generalizing words do not enlighten him. In itself this particular *ouk oida* may seem insignificant. But it is part of a pattern of Hippolytus' entrances in ignorance and even bewilderment: his ignorance is intimately connected with our sympathy for him (more on this in the last chapter). So much has happened of which he is unaware and of which he does not become fully aware for another 150 lines, that he regains the sympathy he lost in his attack on Phaedra. It is, after all, the second time that Hippolytus has come on stage shortly after he has been condemned to death.[14] He sees that Phaedra is dead. What he does not know is how he is involved in her death, nor even that he is involved.

The next time Hippolytus says *ouk oida*, it is to deny first-hand knowledge of sexual union (1004). Except for hearsay and artistic representation (which he does not relish), he is ignorant of the act. This is his main line of defense against his father's accusation. But ignorance is difficult to prove. And is not this ignorance, or even innocence, the main line of Aphrodite's accusation (14)? The plea of innocence in the larger picture, far from being a sufficient defense, is an admission of

[14] This parallelism is especially effective if, as Sider suggests, 19, Phaedra is cowering behind the statue of Aphrodite during Hippolytus' tirade. Her presence there would once again give life and personality to the statue which has been an abstraction since the departure of the goddess. It is a direction toward which Hippolytus would not turn his gaze. In any case, in revealing Hippolytus' "involvement," Phaedra acts remarkably like Aphrodite, after she has been treated as Aphrodite was treated by Hippolytus. For another interpretation of the staging in this scene see Smith *passim*. Also Taplin, 70-71, 155.

guilt. Theseus' picture of his son is false, almost a reversed image drawn by Phaedra to put him in her place. And the father embroiders the distortion by adding further falsehoods. Nor is Aphrodite's version the whole: what she knows and makes us know is only a small part of what there is to know. Hippolytus puts it in better perspective when he says, "one thing I have not experienced" (1002). Of course, far from regretting this inexperience, he is proud of it. When, however, Professor Knox writes, "The ...pattern [of choice between speech and silence] seems to represent the exhaustion of the possibilities of the human will,"[15] brilliant though the observation is, it is not enough: for that choice does not quite exhaust the intellectual efforts (if not capacities) of these characters. There is also the choice *not to know*. It is obvious—from what Aphrodite says, from what happens to Hippolytus, from the emphasis given to his rejection of the old man's advice, underscored by the servant's asking forgiveness for his young master—that Hippolytus is not excused for his ignorance. It may also be said that Hippolytus' innocence is not as complete as he boasts: he may not seek out talk about and graphic representations of Aphrodite's works, but he does make assumptions about women in general and about Phaedra which are not the products of a mind untouched. He tries to make knowledge and the lack of it matters of the will: but he cannot.

Finally (at lines 1032-4) we see Hippolytus beginning to understand, beginning to recognize in Phaedra one of the qualities (*sōphrosunē*) he admires in himself, and perhaps with this paradoxical statement (1034), beginning to see the possibility of shifting meanings and applications of words, the beginning of wisdom. "If she killed herself in fear, *ouk oida*, I can say no more."[16] Of course his promise to keep silence prevents his speaking here. And he has just attested his innocence with the strongest oath (1028-31). And he has just used the word *kakos* of himself for the second time (1031, cf. 654, 1071, 1075, 1191). His ignorance is changing from the prideful, aloof, claim of a virgin soul, who had divided the world into two classes, the *kakoi* and the *sōphrones* (80-81), to a more humble human sort. Thus in his final scene he does reach a more fundamental understanding than he is usually given credit for (1401, 1405). The profound confusion of a man—a man who is little more than a boy—coming to understand that even his life could be tainted by that which he had rejected physically, intellectually, and spiritually, and his coming to realize that, though he is and remains the most virtuous of men, he can

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[15] Knox, 6.

[16] Or with Nauck and Barrett, "fearing what".

be seen by others as evil, is evident in the poignant speech before his last, bitter, exit (1091):

ὡς οἶδα μὲν ταῦτ', οἶδα δ' οὐχ ὅπως φράσω.

"Ah that I know these things, but know not how to make them known!" He had said to Nurse (656), "my *eusebes* saves you." He begins to see the grim irony of the reality in which what saves this woman is the same virtue that destroys himself. The situation is fixed (1090) and here Hippolytus realizes that it is he who made it changeless. Change is a tragic fact of human life. Certainty is yet more tragic.

Hippolytus learns that he is not as pure and untouchable as he thought: he is forced to see himself through others' eyes. His virtue was based on ignorance and rejection of experience (cf. 14, 1002-6). What he laments (at 1091) is not the inability to know. He knows more than he ever wanted to know. But unlike the other participants in this tragic event, Hippolytus is not corrupted by his knowledge and suffering. Against all reason he abides by his word, even though he has more to lose than Phaedra had. Disgraced, exiled, abandoned by the gods he worshipped, Hippolytus does not give up his belief in his own perfection, the high standard by which he lives.

At the opposite pole is Phaedra's Nurse, a pure empiricist. To fulfill her function of persuading Phaedra to betray herself (and incidentally to play Aphrodite's role for her), she needs to know. Most of Nurse's part before line 350 is a lament over the inability to know (both in general and in particular). She speaks, for example, of *apeirosunē* and *apodeixis*, in a speech which warns us that she values nothing above living and experience, that in fact nothing exists for her until she has experienced it, that her understanding of Phaedra's inner self, which Euripides is at pains to bring before us, can be only superficial. Or, to put it another way, Nurse does not believe her mistress. Nurse tells the chorus (271)[17]:

οὐκ οἶδ' ἐλέγχους. (text uncertain)

But Nurse will find a way, not by any plan, but she will keep trying until she hits upon the right words, the right combination of factors. Her most crucial denial of knowledge comes later, after her second thoughts when she answers Phaedra's desperate question on the kind of charm she intends to use with the words *ouk oida* (517). True words these are in a way, for Nurse has only the vaguest of plans before she acts. There are no charms, no drugs, no spells. There is only the sharing of what knowledge she has with the first person she meets on the other side of the

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[17] On the textual difficulties see Barrett ad loc. What matters is the denial of knowledge, the admission of a temporary barrier.

door, coupled with the unacknowledged belief that Phaedra's life and health will best be served in this way and that this positive goal will be enough to persuade "the friends within" (524). In a brutal juxtaposition, Nurse is given a speech following Phaedra's famous statement of the conclusions of her long and honest self-scrutiny. After considering the state of affairs for a matter of minutes, Nurse produces her rationalization in which she attempts to soften the horror of Phaedra's passion with old tales of divine amours. She reverses the conclusion of the old servant's argument that gods are wiser than men. She repeats by way of proof *isasi, isasi* (453, 454), "they know, they know" but you do not know.

Phaedra it is who makes the most overt use of her intellect, who considers the relation between knowledge and action, and plans accordingly. The truth does not necessarily set us free, she concludes: there is a kind of knowledge that enslaves a man (425) and this she must prevent at all costs. Only once does Phaedra use the words we hear almost as a refrain in the play: responding to the chorus' question, "what will you do now?" she says, οὐκ οἶδα πλὴν ἕν (599). She will die. At this point her plan has not been made. Not until her last speech does she make up her mind to destroy Hippolytus. He must be destroyed because of his knowledge of her sickness. Phaedra is well aware of the ambiguities of deceiving appearances. She, as Hippolytus comes to be, is aware that the same virtue can save and destroy. Tragically she acts on this awareness to save herself from the consequences of the shared knowledge (a shared knowledge that does not carry with it forgiveness). Phaedra will make Hippolytus share the sickness itself, for that sickness has come to be far removed from action and even desire. The sickness is the false reputation. Phaedra learns this very quickly and in spite of her long deliberations, ultimately she acts with as little thought as Nurse or Theseus. She acts contrary to the stated conclusions of her long speech. She knows that she is doing evil (728), that she will be evil. She fails to take into consideration the intimate connections which make up the present *kairos*, the character of Hippolytus (who would not tell his father), the reaction of Theseus (whom she did not want to hurt), the nature of the evil she is committing and its effect on her reputation (for she does believe that evil will out). She remembers only to secure the secrecy of the chorus.

The chorus has its share in spreading ignorance. *Tosouton ismen* (804) is the equivalent of *ouk oida*. "we know only so much, for we have just arrived," they tell Theseus. The chorus, of course, is sworn to secrecy. It is, nevertheless, disturbing to hear this denial from a chorus that ended the parodos with the words μαθεῖν ἔραται ψυχή (173). The chorus sums up the tragedy with an adage (981-2):

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπως εἴποιμ' ἂν εὐτυχεῖν τινα
θνητῶν.

They make it sound as if the tragedy were happening of its own accord or were imposed on the mortals from outside. But we have seen each step caused by ignorance or unwillingness to know, by deliberate falsification or inept generalization. The chorus has had a part in this destructive use of *gnōmē*.

Finally there is Theseus. In a play dealing, as this one does, with knowledge, ignorance and revelation, the arrival of a new and totally ignorant character arouses interest. We know from the prologue that the matter will be revealed to him. But we do not know what the "matter" is. Theseus' ignorance separates him from us and from the chorus with whom we share knowledge and in a way complicity or at least involvement in what has happened and been made known. Like the chorus, he enters asking a series of questions, but he knows even less than they did. Like all the others Theseus acts in ignorance and haste. This is not to say that Theseus acts unnaturally; even Hippolytus comes to understand enough of human passion to see that (1413). But his ignorance and unwillingness to track down the facts is underscored by the desire for a sure method of knowing the truth and by his odd wish that men had two voices. The chorus, and even Nurse, are presented doing what Hippolytus and Theseus fail to do: asking questions, trying to get at the truth. Like Hippolytus, Theseus assumes that he does know, οἶδ' ἐγὼ νέους (967). As so often the generalization is inept.

Τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι μὲν πρῶτον ἐκλύει κάκης,

says Artemis (1335). What are we to make of this statement, especially coming from Artemis who makes her appearance in order to taunt Theseus with the truth? Ignorance is a condition of Hippolytus' soul and it is excused by neither Aphrodite nor Phaedra. Phaedra acts contrary to the understanding she has gained through reason to promote a falsehood in the hope that it will be believed permanently, that it will in effect be the truth. Theseus is so sure that he does know that he will look no further. As for Aphrodite, though she does nothing in the play, she promises to reveal a *pragma* which can be nothing other than Phaedra's lie. The desire for clear knowledge or true witness voiced by the chorus, Nurse, Phaedra, Theseus, Hippolytus leads to naught. Hippolytus from the beginning believes that ignorance is better than knowledge, but others in speech or action revert to his position before he comes to reverse himself. In the end, passion, whether fear, anger, or loathing, overcomes the longing for truth. Each is so certain of the partial evidence he sees or hears that he blinds himself to the truth in its complexity. And each, believing that part, generalizes it, refusing to understand more deeply even when it is possible to do so. Nurse, for example, manages to get the

truth out of Phaedra but fails to comprehend her deeper anxieties; Phaedra too fails to understand Nurse's motives, so sure is each of the paramount importance of her own concerns.

Τὸ μὴ εἰδέναι is a condition, but not a consistent condition, of the human characters acting singly and in concert. And the gods do no better. For it is the mortals who want to understand and who finally do understand. So shallow in fact is Artemis' understanding that she gives Hippolytus no active part in the tragedy. The striking and tragic contrast between the longing to know and the willingness to accept the easy answers, the wrong answers, is one of the things the play is about.

Ignorance is a small but not insignificant aspect of knowing in the *Hippolytus*, a drama concerned with knowledge, with levels of knowing and not knowing, and with ways of knowing. Not only do the characters talk about knowledge and lament its absence in themselves and others, and long for a clear and infallible means of knowing, but they even tell, at times explicitly, the processes by which they reach their conclusions. The characters, moreover—in their attempt to understand events—impute to each other motives, intentions, knowledge, thoughts which go wide of the mark: this is most clear in the debate between Theseus and Hippolytus in which each agonist states and refutes what he supposes to be the rationale of the other. The patterns of speech and silence[18] are part of the question of knowledge, as are those of rationalism and irrationalism.[19]

Of interest throughout is the relation of the audience's knowledge to that of the characters: subtly, Euripides draws the audience into participation in the exciting and pathetic search for the truth, by giving us more information than the characters hold, but by letting us know at the last that even that knowledge was incomplete.[20] It is in the prologue that Euripides lets us know that this is a play about knowledge when Aphrodite, in a bold leap over the first two episodes, juxtaposes "no one knows" (40) to "it will come into the light" (42). Our intellectual involvement (the subject of the last chapter) is further stimulated by the playwright's undermining of all the traditional paths to knowledge, from the homely truth of clichés to reason, experience, argument, revelation from the gods.

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[18] Knox *passim*.

[19] Hathorn *passim*.

[20] On the use of prologue prediction to create certain expectations in the audience and to shape audience reactions, see Hamilton, who speaks of the prologue prophecy as enhancing the dramatic action "by creating a second level of action in the audience to echo it" p. 301. One stratum of this second level of action in the *Hippolytus* concerns the getting of knowledge and the sharing of knowledge and ignorance. The audience participates in the epistemology of the play in the same way the characters do. On "dialogue between author and audience" see Smith, 168.

But does the *Hippolytus* say that ignorance is an inevitable part of the human condition, that men must always be one step behind?[21] Does the play not, even if it suggests this bleak conclusion, also offer an alternative? Does it not show that it is possible to know, as Phaedra says, what is right? For in every movement, in every debate and discussion, there is at least one person who knows, but cannot convince the other(s) or who will not make known what there is to know. In the prologue the old servant knows that Hippolytus is wrong. But he is not able to persuade either his master to honor Aphrodite or the goddess to forgive his young master. In the first episode interest is concentrated on the knowing but silent Phaedra. Nurse and chorus are ignorant but eager to know, and soon move into the ranks of the knowing. But the thing to be known changes and Nurse misses it. The focus has shifted from the *nosos* to the *eukleia* of Phaedra. Nurse, who thinks a patch can mend anything, makes promises, but is evasive about what she plans to do. The scene of Phaedra at the door, percolating the distant voices, one step removed, is a subtle variation on the theme. Hippolytus bursts out, ignorant of the pain, ignorant of the glory. He will not listen to Nurse. He cannot question. He gives a series of foolish and frightening answers. Phaedra, Nurse, chorus, all knowing the truth (in varying degrees of accuracy and sensitivity) must listen to this abysmal tirade. Now it is Phaedra's turn to hide the details of her plan (even from us: we do not know how she will bring about the downfall of Hippolytus until our attention is called to the letter). Phaedra knows. Once again success depends upon secrecy. Chorus with sympathy for Phaedra knowingly promises secrecy, but without knowing the consequences of this willing vow. Knowledge inevitably means complicity. Theseus enters knowing nothing. In his scene is displayed every variation on the theme, from total ignorance (his own) to partial (Hippolytus') and even full knowledge (chorus' and our own). Euripides is playing an intellectual game with his audience when he lets Theseus, who has missed everything, who knows nothing, be the one whose role it is to reveal the existence and contents of this letter to the knowing chorus and audience. Of course Aphrodite's plan, and Phaedra's, and Euripides' depend on the ignorance of Theseus. Hippolytus knows enough to save himself (from exile at least), if only he could speak and be believed, but he does not know enough to understand. Of course he knows nothing of the curse until he experiences its fulfillment. Theseus knows only the contents of the letter and the evidence of the corpse of his wife. The chorus knows everything we know (unless like Theseus they are uncertain of the efficacy of the curse). What

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[21] As Stahl suggests, 161.

is left to know is only the manner of Hippolytus' death. A messenger brings the news. He and the chorus are aware in the face of Theseus' gloating of the character of the victim. Too great a gulf separates us from Theseus. He must be made to share with us knowledge of his son's innocence. When Artemis arrives to clear Hippolytus' name, the theme of the pain of knowing reaches its climax (1297, 1314). Even Hippolytus recognizes with a gasp the power that has destroyed him (1401). Even Hippolytus would curse the gods (1415). The ironic contrast of the pathetic isolation in arrogant ignorance of each person whose turn it is to act, face to face with someone on stage who knows the truth but cannot or will not make it known, this contrast makes Artemis' statement (of 1335) seem so trite and inane.

The play ends with forgiveness, not only the formal freeing from the stain of kindred bloodshed of the father by the son, but shared pain and shared knowledge. *Sungnōmē*, knowledge in its most human[22] and most sublime and most painful form, redeems in some way the pain, loss, and death of these good people who had bravely struggled to know only the good and to have only the good known of them. Theseus cannot be forgiven until he knows the truth. *Sungnōmē* does not happen among the ignorant. It requires a recognition and acceptance of the other and of oneself. "You would have killed me anyway," says Hippolytus (1413). It is what he had suggested to his father in their *agōn* when he had tried to put himself in his father's place and even tried to know what his father knew (1041-4).

In this painful intellectual game, made possible by the seeming absence of suspense and free will caused by Aphrodite's opening prophecy, the audience is invited to participate in the process of the sharing of knowledge. There is between the audience and the actors a communion of knowledge and with it complicity in the action, for that is the price of knowing.

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[22] Cf. Knox, 30.

οὔτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα
θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν,
ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες
ἐφευρίσχουσιν ἄμεινον.
Xenophanes

CHAPTER SIX

PLAY AND AUDIENCE

'Επεί νιν ἐσθλὸν ὄντ' ἐπίσταμαι...
1254

By the time the messenger makes this simple and true statement, we have seen the failure of every method of knowing the truth. Falsehood has prevailed. Revelation has proved false. How do we know that what the messenger says here is true, that Hippolytus is *esthlos*? How do we know in a world of shifting truth, which words are appropriate? How do we know anything when all the traditional ways of knowing are shown to be inadequate and the characters are at their wits' end to invent new ones? And yet we do agree with this statement at this time. We share this understanding with the messenger now, although there have been times when we would not have chosen the word *esthlos* above all to characterize Hippolytus. And of course other characterizations are made of him.

We know from the first speech in the play, how the characters will be at the end, Hippolytus dead, Phaedra dead, Theseus in mourning for his wife, guilty of his son's death. In fact, however, surprisingly few of the goddess' lines in that opening speech are devoted to telling the future disaster, deaths and undoings, which she claims to cause. A second goddess goes over the same terrain with some additions and alterations after the fact. What are these goddesses for? Why do we need two deities to tell us what we are about to see and what we have seen? Is it not the case that much of what each goddess declares is either mystifying or runs counter to our experience of the play?

Aphrodite makes a prophecy which comes true in the play. What is it that she says that comes true? What does she mean by the truth?

Δείξω δὲ μύθων τῶνδ' ἀλήθειαν (9).

In her opening lines, the goddess Kupris states unambiguously who she is and the reaches of her power; and further that she advances those who honor her and brings down those who are presumptuous toward her (*phronousin eis hēmas mega* 6). That Hippolytus is the example chosen to prove this point is made clear by the following lines (9-23). This is one truth. In the realm of theology she gives us an important piece of information, namely that gods enjoy being honored by men (7-8).[1] It may not

[1] Cf. Dover, 76ff. It should be noted that whereas Kupris describes in some detail the sins of omission for which she will punish Hippolytus, Artemis gives no such rationaliza-

seem like much, but Euripides could have omitted the motive which actuates the goddess' decision to destroy Hippolytus and Phaedra along with him. The first eight lines are her statement of cosmic truth.

At line 9, her use of the future (*deixō*) shows that she is beginning a prophecy. But before she can predict, she must state the facts. Thus the present (and sadly temporary) state of Hippolytus is paralleled to the present (and permanent) state of Aphrodite. And contrasted too: the green wood of Trozen is Hippolytus' realm, opposed to all the world from sea to sea and from earth to sky.[2] Aphrodite's effective juxtaposition of herself to Hippolytus—her six line introduction of herself beside his two lines (10-11), which are then extended by a description of his life (to line 19)—invites us to set up in our minds an opposition, to (as it were) balance the two, man and god.[3] With her definitions (of herself and of Hippolytus), with her show of power, Kupris makes it plain that there is a great gulf between men and gods. Her words would not lead us to believe that human-divine intimacy is the rule (cf. 19). Men and gods do not meet on an equal basis. What we will see is one lonely man (12) who says no to this scheme. Aphrodite informs us fairly clearly that no is not one of the allowed responses.[4]

At line 21, Aphrodite returns to the future tense (*timōrēsomai*): "I shall take vengeance on Hippolytus this very day" (21-22) . . . "It does not require of me much toil" (23). Once again the goddess approaches the future, but then takes a leap into the past and its effect on the present state. This is another of her truths, another display of her power. She tells that Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytus when he came to Athens, that she built a temple, that Theseus killed some of his kinsmen and therefore Phaedra is now suffering in Trozen in proximity to Hippolytus. It is a complex series of events. We must notice here how closely and creatively the mortals cooperate with their gods, or are these opportunistic gods,

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tion of what she will do to Aphrodite's favorite. If we may use the one goddess' statement to interpret the other's, does Artemis not cast some doubt on the truthfulness of line 20, especially in the light of the preceding lines (15-19) with their strong contrasts and clear disapprovals?

[2] On sea and woodland and the associations with each, see Segal (1965).

[3] On the breaking down of barriers between the human and the divine in the prologue, see Kovacs (*CP*), 133.

[4] Hippolytus does not say *no* to gods in general, only to those who represent what he finds morally reprehensible in the world. This immorality he attributes to the god in question. What he does not understand is that the impassable gulf which separates men and gods is deepened by the fact that human morality does not apply to the gods. Their inability to see two sides or two possibilities at once prevents them from being able to make moral decisions. Furthermore, his personal relationship with Artemis leads him to fail to grasp the phenomenal nature of the god he rejects (and of the god he loves).

taking advantage of the changes in men's fortunes?[5] Now at last (41vv) Aphrodite moves to the heart of her prophecy, to the future, to what we will see in the play:

> But this love is not destined to end in this way
> I shall reveal the thing (*pragma*) to Theseus and it will come out into the light
> and the father will kill the young man I hate
> with curses the sea's king Poseidon gave to Theseus
> as a gift, to pray to the god three times with none unfulfilled.
> But the woman, though of good repute, still will die,
> Phaedra. (41-48)

In the distance the goddess sees Hippolytus coming with his band of followers. She announces him and departs with the cold statement, the last point of her visitation:

> He does not know the gates of Hades stand
> open and he is looking on his last light. (56-7)

What is mystifying in this prophecy? We know that Hippolytus will die, cursed by his father, and that Kupris will be avenged. We know that Phaedra will die, too, presumably of love. These are Aphrodite's truths. These events will increase her honor and her pleasure. But does our foreknowledge of these truths have the effect of robbing the play of suspense?[6] Perhaps not. To begin with one obvious point: Aphrodite reverses the order of the deaths of Hippolytus and Phaedra.[7] Euripides is misleading us here, for he has good reason for not wanting Phaedra around when Theseus learns about the *pragma* (of line 42). Another obvious point is the omission of Nurse whose role is cardinal in passing on the information about Phaedra's sickness. But we are getting ahead of ourselves: the original audience had not seen the play and so would not notice that their expectations were being deceived, yet. Indeed, if they had seen the first *Hippolytus* they would probably expect the death of Phaedra to follow that of Hippolytus. It is likely too that Nurse's role was not as important in the first play, possibly she was more like the innocent and kindly body of the *Medea* who becomes involved only because of her loyalty, but initiates nothing in the plot.

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[5] One cannot help wondering how much of this narration reflects Aphrodite's (alleged) plans: the repeated word *ekdēmon* (32, 37) may be suggestive. Phaedra's love was *ekdēmon* (32); the goddess could not, for that reason, effectuate her plan of vengeance. But Theseus' acceptance of a year's exile *ekdēmon* puts the two, Hippolytus and Phaedra, in the same place. Are Theseus' murders of his cousins and his visit to the oracle (281) part of her plan?

[6] As Richard Hamilton remarks in passing, 277. But see Zeitlin, 54, "The most striking feature of our drama is that it reaches its expected conclusion only through deviation and detour and, above all, through the acting of each character for an other."

[7] Barrett ad 42 and 41-50.

But in itself the prologue prophecy, while making certain predictions which we expect to see fulfilled in the play, also creates a number of questions and disturbing doubts about how and why these predictions are to be fulfilled.

First (taking Aphrodite's words as they come), what is the exact nature of Hippolytus' *hamartia* (implied by the word *hēmartēken* 21)? Apparently, it is failure to honor Aphrodite in the ways noted in lines 12-14, an error of attitude and performance. But he does not make the same mistake with regard to Artemis, her sister goddess: the juxtaposition and parallelism of *kakistēn daimonōn* and *megistēn daimonōn* is surely significant. It may be that Hippolytus' error consists in his inability to realize that to worship Artemis while rejecting Aphrodite is to make a wrong division of things since both goddesses belong to the same honor-loving species.[8] Is his error then one of understanding? How is it that he can be so intimate with one goddess and yet know so little about the gods? It being the case then that Hippolytus rejects both Aphrodite and her function, what can the *pragma* be which Kupris will reveal to Theseus which will be convincing enough for him to curse his son? We know that Hippolytus

ἀναίνεται δὲ λέκτρα κοὐ ψαύει γάμων (14).

We know furthermore that Phaedra, the other doomed member of the triangle, though dying (39, 47) is doing so in silence (40) and no one of the servants shares knowledge with her. The getting of knowledge, true or false, is to be the action of the play. In three lines (40-42) Aphrodite has taken a bold step over the first two and a half episodes of the drama (as we shall see). But even here her words mystify us.[9] How do we get from *xunoide d' outis* (40) to *kakphanēsetai* (42)? *Deixō de*, the first words of line 42 remind us of line 9 where Aphrodite promised to reveal the *truth* of her words. Her truth is a mysterious truth. It is (is it not?) disturbing—given what she has said about Hippolytus' rejection and Phaedra's virtue—that whatever she will reveal to Theseus by way of a *pragma* in order to show the truth of her words, cannot be anything other than a falsehood? We must suspect as much even now, since an impure, unchaste Hippolytus is out of the question. The three lines, by juxtaposing "no one knows" to "it shall be revealed," set up an intriguing problem in our minds, "an adventure in reason"[10]: the getting of knowledge, not only how will it be revealed, but especially *what* will be revealed. The enticing question is, can even a god reveal what is not?[11]

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[8] On this aspect of Hippolytus' *hamartia*, see Berns and Braund.
[9] Barrett ad loc.
[10] On "adventures in reason" see Solmsen.
[11] Kerferd, Chapter 9.

What is the nature of Hippolytus' *hamartia*? What is it that Aphrodite will reveal about him? Another question arises from the predication of *eukleēs* (of good reputation, glorious, honorable) of Phaedra (47). This is not the word the members of the audience who had seen the first *Hippolytus* would have chosen. Phaedra will die honorably. And yet her shameful secret will be brought into the light. How can this be? The two truths seem to exclude each other. Even Kupris refers to the passion of Phaedra as *nosos*. Are we not expected to ask, if Phaedra's love is revealed to Theseus (as Aphrodite implies it will be), would *she* not be the more likely object of his murderous ire? Aphrodite's order of telling puts Phaedra's death after that of Hippolytus, making this question all the more mystifying. Very little of the plot is actually revealed by Aphrodite: only the barest outlines and even these are blurred by her manner of telling.

A final doubt occurs at lines 47-50. This doubt may indeed have occurred earlier, but Kupris reminds us of it here, in case we missed it the first time. Does Aphrodite not contradict herself when she sentences Phaedra, who did, after all, build a temple to her, to fall in the common destruction of her enemies (49), after claiming to advance those who honor her? And does she not raise another uncertainty by showing Hippolytus to be at once pious (in his attendance on Artemis and association with her) and impious (in his lack of relation to Aphrodite)? Is Hippolytus' relationship to Artemis (though excessive) not something like the proper relationship of mortal to god described by Aphrodite in line 5? And so we return to our original question, what is Hippolytus being punished for? We do know that Hippolytus rejects Aphrodite, but that in itself does not engage our interest as much as the other questions. What does it mean to reject Aphrodite? Phaedra too is fighting Kupris. The only woman Hippolytus is associated with in Aphrodite's speech is Phaedra. He cannot be condemned for taking no erotic interest in her.

The audience is in the position of both knowing and coming to know. We know in advance the fates of the characters, but we do not know how or why these fates fit them. We do not know their involvement in their fates. Aphrodite is careless of details: a small step for a goddess is a giant leap for mankind. The details do not matter to her, but they are all-important for the actors in the drama. The thing that is revealed turns out not to be what we believe Aphrodite promised to reveal (cf. 42, 903). But that is negligible to her: what matters to her is the destruction of Hippolytus and the display of the truth of her power. Phaedra's struggle and her *eukleia* serve to enhance that truth. A literal-minded reader or viewer might be disturbed midway through the drama by Kupris having taken credit for the revelation. What does she reveal even through Phaedra?

Not the woman's love for Hippolytus, but his (non-existent) involvement. Artemis is the one to reveal Phaedra's love for Hippolytus to Theseus. The passage of knowledge, if it is not a central theme of the play, is beyond any doubt an exciting piece of stage business in which all the characters share. It is also a means of involving the audience in all the issues of the play. The audience, by being made aware of what will happen, is forced to concentrate on the important matter of complicity in the disaster through "willful" ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation or conspiratorial silence.

Aphrodite's off-handed omission of the stuff of the first two episodes (in her brazen juxtaposition of "no one knows" to "it will be revealed") calls attention to the problem of knowledge in the play. In the space of three lines (40-42) she moves without giving a clue about the progress of this knowledge, from absolute lack of knowledge to lethally effective knowledge. We are left with the question, what will be revealed? Certainly not the truth as we like to know it. These are some of the doubts raised by the words of Aphrodite. We are in a special position because we know the outcome. But we watch the mortal characters play out their tragedies not with the attitude of superior knowledge that they are dispensable puppets to be cut off one by one, but with keen interest in their doings, in what they will make known to us. How will this prophecy come true when it seems at its end so full of contradiction? Euripides opens his play by involving his audience in this fascinating question: how is knowledge reached; and in the even more basic question, what is there to know?

What are the ways of knowing dramatized in the *Hippolytus*? How do we know? How do the characters know? Do we know in the same ways that the characters know?

Divine revelation is one process by which mortals learn the truth. The play provides several instances of it. Of course there are the prologue (available only to the audience) and the epilogue in which the goddesses severally give their interpretations. The knowledge gained this way turns out to be the kind of knowledge which renders human activity ineffectual. No action can be taken in answer to it. In the epilogue, what Hippolytus is able to react to is his father's knowledge: he is not present when Artemis goes through the steps of the tragedy. The facts given by Aphrodite, such as they are, guide our sympathies and expectations, but they have no effect on the characters and their doings. We may join our support to the suggestion made by the old servant that Hippolytus worship Aphrodite and be saved. But we know it is in vain. We know this in a variety of ways: from Aphrodite's pronouncement, from our prior knowledge of the myth, from our generic expectations. For the real infor-

mation given us by Aphrodite is not that Hippolytus will come to grief and that Phaedra is in the throes of an unhappy passion, but that Hippolytus is in some way guilty and Phaedra in some way innocent: and this is indeed one of the great intellectual surprises of the play.[12] Phaedra's nobility and Hippolytus' involvement are the surprises we wait to see enacted. Nurse once again feeds our vain hope that there is a cure for Phaedra's illness, a hope based on Phaedra's overwhelming desire to be good. We know that our expectations will not be deceived: the prophecy will come true. But these suggestions of alternatives create in us an ambiguous mental state: for they show the vanity of human knowledge and action and at the same time concentrate our attention on the complicity of both Phaedra and Hippolytus in their own and each other's undoing. Each rejects the alternative. The false hope confirms our certainty that Kupris' words are true by bringing them back to our attention: this love is not destined to go unnoticed. But Hippolytus is already condemned and we cannot know if he could redeem himself at that late date by paying lip service to Aphrodite. Nurse's alternative, first rejected and then unwisely accepted by Phaedra, turns out to be the revelation of Phaedra's passion for him to Hippolytus and an attempt at seduction, the one alternative utterly rejected by Phaedra. Nurse's attempt to cure her mistress brings on Hippolytus' denunciation, which in turn precipitates Phaedra's death and contributes to her false witness. Are these Aphrodite's revelation? If so, of course, they are false. Aphrodite has succeeded in demonstrating that which is not! The literal truth or falsehood are not the goddess' concern. She is interested only in the effect. Our role is like that of the chorus: they know a better truth but can do nothing.

The second major revelation confirms the gods' point of view that human action is futile and meaningless. Aphrodite had mocked human motivation by twisting the truth to fit her vision of it. Theseus does not kill Hippolytus because his wife was in love with him. The goddess' omissions malign the king of Athens. Nor is the immediate cause of Phaedra's suicide love for Hippolytus. When Artemis subsumes the human action in the cosmic revenge play, the viewer protests. Divine revelation has little to do with human realities. In the matter of Theseus' guilt it is vital that we know what is revealed to him.

The minor examples of knowledge gained from the gods bear out the gulf between human and divine. Hippolytus hunts and converses with Artemis. He has her special favor. But he receives no special knowledge

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[12] See Zeitlin, 52-58, on the Phaedra of this play "responding directly to and identifying with the audience's reaction to the previous play" (53). See also Reckford, 309-319.

from her that would help him survive in this world of men and in that of gods. Theologically he is infantile, nor is he any more advanced anthropologically. Theseus speaks directly to Poseidon, but only after the fulfillment does he know that his curse was genuine. This revelation he interprets wrongly, assuming that Poseidon is his father and that his son is guilty. Poseidon's role is another example of the gods' moral incapacity. Poseidon cannot break his promise. Even though he knows that to keep it will mean killing an innocent man and bringing unbearable guilt and pain upon the favored recipient of his gift, even so, he has no choice. Hippolytus, on the other hand, could have broken his oath: twice he considers breaking it. He does not (intentionally) break it. And even if we are forced to admit that because he is the way he is he cannot break it, still he can consider and reject the possibility. Human beings are creatures of possibilities; gods are not. Possibly the sorriest example of divine revelation is the one presented most indirectly in the play. Theseus has been away from his home-away-from-home (as we learn from Nurse 281; cf. 37). When he comes home to find his household in chaos, we learn that he has been visiting the oracle. Good news apparently, for he is wearing a crown which he talks about as he throws it off (806). We know nothing of the purpose of this consultation. But whatever the god told him, whether true or false, it was useless for the present tragedy. Revelation turns out to be no guide for our mortal world.

If we learn little about what matters to us from the gods, perhaps the play shows human beings learning from each other. The parodos changes the epistemological focus from talk about gods and divine influence to talk about human beings and information passed by them. No one knows why Phaedra is ill, but nearly everyone (Hippolytus and Theseus being exceptions) knows that she is ill. The parodos introduces the pattern of third party information or hearsay. The chorus has heard from a friend that their queen is wasting away from an unknown sickness. That is not enough for them. They want first hand information, or at least they want to know from someone more intimate with the palace. And so they question Nurse, who in turn questions Phaedra. Hearsay continues to play a large part in the action. Nurse passes information about her mistress to Hippolytus who believes that it comes from his step-mother, as in fact it does. He does not question either Nurse or Phaedra. He makes no attempt to get first-hand intelligence. Rather, he expatiates on the passage of information (645-650; cf. 395-7). Basing his judgments on hearsay, Hippolytus abuses Phaedra and reinforces her own belief in the power of words said about one. She dooms Hippolytus by removing herself from the process of question and answer that has already proved disastrous for her. Theseus believes the evidence from his wife about his

son and like his son does not try to find our more directly. Throughout there is failure of direct knowledge of the *ēthos* of the persons involved: even the most intimate family relationships do not guarantee such 'ethical' knowledge. Here again, the chorus' role as sympathetic witness is our guide.

Clichés, proverbs, maxims, words of the sages and poets of old are a form of knowledge, much favored by Nurse, but resorted to by other characters as well. Received truths are a variation of hearsay, but even less likely to be questioned than the more personal sort of tale-telling. Nurse supports her belief in human flexibility by much quotation of old saws and references to *hoi sophoi*. Proverbial wisdom may be valuable, but its use in the play is ironic. A few examples (taken from among the expressions labelled by such words as 'they say' 262, 'among mortals' 436, 'the wise will agree with me' 266) must suffice to demonstrate the failure of this kind of wisdom unexamined. In a battle of clichés (as has been noted in Chapter 4, above), as in any debate which takes its form from balanced quotations from whatever authority, each item has equal weight and only the best memory or quickest tongue can tip the scale. So Nurse wears out Phaedra with the accumulated mass of her scraps of wisdom.

"Nothing is excess," says Nurse, "is better than the opposite" (265). She thus concludes her ruminations on the need for elasticity in human relationships. Interestingly, Nurse is the only character (other than Hippolytus' men) in the play who remains steadfast in her love for another mortal. Phaedra, who is doubtless sincerely anxious not to bring disgrace upon Theseus, tends to forget his existence, and has no concern at all for his grief and guilt when she decides to lie about his son and destroy his family. And her love for Hippolytus turns out to be all too *euluta* (cf. 256). The lifelong Nurse is dismissed by her mistress with curses. But Nurse is faithful from beginning to end: it is her voice we hear at the close of Phaedra's life, still crying for help, still trying futilely to save her mistress' life. Theseus' love for his son is easily broken by Phaedra's lie. Even Artemis' love for Hippolytus is not steadfast (1441). Though Hippolytus is faithful to Artemis and to his oath, in human relationships he remains unentangled.

"Second thoughts are in any case wiser" (436). With these infamous and memorable words, Nurse introduces her specious generalizations of Phaedra's love.[13] Needless to say Nurse makes everything worse. Her immediate reaction was far more suitable than her subsequent reconsiderations. But there are places where this cliché would have been good

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[13] Knox, 15-16.

advice and well taken. Hippolytus is advised to reconsider his attitude to Aphrodite in the prologue and Nurse later begs him to think before he continues his abuse. A little prior consideration might have saved Hippolytus and chorus from swearing to keep silence before knowing the consequences. And of course Theseus' curse would not have been uttered if he had made the effort to find out more. The second thoughts that are acted upon, on the other hand, prove disastrous.

"To err is human" (615) offers Nurse in desperation. Hippolytus ignores her plea for pardon and raves on. If this kind of behavior is human then he would change human nature. Artemis repeats the sentiment (1434-5) and bids Hippolytus not to hate his father. He obeys. Neither notices that Hippolytus has already demonstrated his forgiveness of his father (1407vv.) by understanding his pain and guilt and joining him in blaming the gods (1414-15). True though these lovely old saws are, they are an insufficient guide for life. And those who use them tend to substitute them for deeper understanding of the situation. Hippolytus does not believe that "to err is human" is an apt saying under the circumstances. It is too trite to apply to the outrage of the suggestion just made to him. But Hippolytus does not realize the complexity of the present situation: the subtleties of *kairos*[14] are more or less lost on him. Nurse is asking to be excused for her own mistake, but in the context, Hippolytus is himself committing a very costly error. It does not occur to him to question himself. Instead he blames Zeus. Zeus made the original mistake by creating women. By the time Artemis notes that people make mistakes, the situation has become much simpler: there are few choices left.

Reason fails too. Phaedra works out the causes of human failure. She has confidence in human intellect. But she is forced to reason in a vacuum. In isolation the complexity of human relationships cannot be worked out. By speaking she has added to the complexity. In his defense Hippolytus, too, uses reason. It falls upon deaf ears. Once again, the failure of reason is related to the failure of intimate knowledge by the characters of each other. Hippolytus' rational argument from probability depends on Theseus' knowledge of his character. Theseus has already indicated that he has no such knowledge. Nor has any character indicated any intimate knowledge of any other. Mostly Hippolytus relies on intuition. He claims innate virtue, but fails to recognize that the same quality is immanent in all mortals. Nurse questions her mistress until she gets the fact, but she does not hear the deeper truth, the intimate details of Phaedra's *ēthos*. But we hear them. At other times when it would help to

[14] Untersteiner, 111.

ask questions no one asks. The effective communication is between the actors and the audience.

In the play only one method of communicating what one knows is operable. The question raised in the prologue by Aphrodite's provocative three lines (40-42), how is the knowledge of Phaedra's illness passed from the silent queen to her husband, involves actors and audience in a common pursuit. In retrospect we find that knowledge comes—as in the prologue, so in the rest of the play—through declaration. Phaedra, after much (intensely interesting) procrastination declares (and at the same time makes Nurse declare it for her) her love for Hippolytus to her Nurse, who though warned and even begged not to, declares it to Hippolytus, who declares that he both will and will not keep it silent, but that he will hate Phaedra forever along with all her sex. Phaedra then, in her inimitable way, declares the *pragma* to Theseus who curses his son; the messenger declares what happened (though with unique honesty in the play, he refuses to declare what he did not see and does not know), and finally Artemis makes her summing up declarations and announcements. A superficial comparison of the last two declarations yields two facts: we believe the messenger because we have not seen what he describes; we do not believe Artemis because we have seen what she describes.

In all these declarations details of character are omitted, as in the prologue. Only in the messenger's speech does the speaker's feeling for the man and his tragedy show through. It is true that in every speech the speaker's *ēthos* is manifested. But only in the messenger's speech is there sympathetic knowledge of another's *ēthos*.

The *ēthos* of the characters is communicated to the chorus and to the audience, but among the characters there is no communication of this kind and no long-standing knowledge of each other such as the messenger has of his master. In every movement of the play (as noted in chapter 5, above) there has been, in the midst of the prevailing and active ignorance, knowledge though passive and ineffectual: one (or a group) who knows but does not share the knowledge. The audience is part of this pattern. In effectiveness passive, we participate emotionally and intellectually. The chorus shows us our role as silent but sympathetic accomplices. Though at first we know more than the chorus, we also learn along with them. In almost every scene we know with the one who knows. Only once are we ignorant. With the chorus we share ignorance of what Phaedra plans to do. None of us could have predicted what she devises. But as soon as Theseus calls attention to the letter, with the chorus (cf. 866-73) we know what it contains.

How does our knowledge affect the way we feel about the characters? From the beginning we know that Hippolytus is doomed, that Phaedra

is doomed, that Theseus will cause his son's death. We know that Hippolytus is being tripped up for some offense and that others will fall with him, that in fact they do not matter. What is the effect of the prologue prophecy on our reaction to the characters as each comes on and plays his role or hers?

Because we know that Hippolytus is doomed (and though we know why, the reason is too abstract to be meaningful) we are naturally sympathetic to him. The contrast between this happy, healthy young man who enters singing joyously with a band of his fellows to the dire and terrible words of the departing goddess is powerful. He is presented first practicing a simple act of devotion in word and deed to his goddess. We may at the end of his first speech have noticed that he is not quite like us. But he has created a world of his own, isolated from corruption and disease, a simple, changeless world. It is a world in which no one else is involved except for him and his goddess. The young men accompany him in the hunt, but not to the garden. It is a world free from the complexities of *kairos* because it is simple and changeless. Why should his life be different from his portrait of it? Why should he not be singled out (*monos* 12; *monō(i)* 84)?

We know that Hippolytus rejects Aphrodite: there is really no place for her in his life. His devotion to Artemis would become ludicrous if he carried on in the same way with Aphrodite.[15] The totality of his relationship does not admit its opposite. Further, taking Aphrodite as function as much as person (that this is possible she herself suggests, 14) we must see that to engage in love is alien to Hippolytus: the life he has created is perfect. There is no way that something or someone else could come into it without destroying it. That he prays that it should end as it began is only natural for one who has achieved perfection (87). That he believes himself under Artemis' protection (60) is surely justified by his relationship to her. Provided that we knew the title, the play could begin at the second half of the prologue (line 58) and we would not be lost: young men (not the main chorus) come on singing of Artemis; Hippolytus describes his life with her and gives her a crown; he sees himself as special and he is special: the *geras* of companionship with Artemis makes him special. Then, when he has finished his morning devotions, his servant addresses him, pointing out in a roundabout way that he is neglecting another cult figure. Hippolytus answers by saying that it does not matter: we make our choices in these things: as we choose our human friends, likewise we can choose our divine friends. He leaves the old man with his Kupris. Looked at in this way the word *your* (of *tēn sēn de Kuprin*, 113) is not as

[15] Sale, esp. 35-52.

contemptuous as it appears.[16] Hippolytus has his Artemis and he tolerantly leaves Aphrodite to his old servant, a more worldly man. Hippolytus believes that we do have a choice; the dialogue has been leading up to this: we humans 'use' the customs of the gods. We do have the right to choose our associates. Or have we?

If we had not heard Aphrodite's prologue speech (if the *Hippolytus* had started at line 58), would we see any unambiguous flaw in Hippolytus, any "existential crime"[17]? Would we not be presented with two views, one insisting that it is necessary to worship all gods, another asserting on personal and moral grounds that it is not. We would have to reserve judgment.[18] The second alternative comes from a man who displays real, personal, deep devotion and that not of words but of his whole life: he has made his life a perfect prayer to his god. The former view comes from a man who pays lip service to all the gods, whether from simple piety or from toadying cynicism is not made clear. Hippolytus' separateness may come from the simple fact that he is privileged by his relationship with the goddess. He does not need anyone else.

But we have heard lines 1-57 and so we know that the old man has guessed right at line 107, and that Hippolytus is making a mistake (cf. line 8). He had made another mistake at line 60: though it is a natural inference from his special relationship with Artemis for him to believe that he is in her care, it is not so. Artemis will not protect him from Aphrodite (as we know from Aphrodite's last words in the prologue). Why this is so is not yet clear.

The big question is how will Hippolytus and Phaedra be brought together? How will Hippolytus' beautiful enclosure be broken into by another person? Our admiration for Hippolytus is mixed with pity and dread because we have the knowledge of (one of) the gods for the duration of the play. We know he is making a theological error. But of what is he guilty in human terms? In spite of the various notices of trials for *asebeia* in Athens toward the end of the fifth century, the picture of an inquisition is not an apt one.[19]

We are waiting then for the presence of the two other characters, two people imposed upon Hippolytus' perfect existence by Theseus' murder of his cousins, the Pallantids.[20] This is one detail not omitted by

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[16] Barrett ad loc.

[17] Crocker's term for Hippolytus' excess of virtue, 240.

[18] Kovacs *CP*, 133.

[19] For a perspective on the impiety trials see Kerferd, 163ff.

[20] This event, the slaying of the Pallantids by Theseus, is mentioned in passing by Aphrodite, but it extends the tragedy backward in time as Artemis' promise of revenge (1420-22) projects it into the future. Aphrodite's *obiter dictum* also is a foreshadowing of Theseus' involvement in the story. In some ways he is the forgotten man: his suffering

Aphrodite. But since Theseus is not needed until later, only scattered references[21] are wanted to keep him in our minds and to show that he is not much in the minds of the other characters. The parodos with its series of questions to the absent Phaedra, inviting us into the women's world, lets us know that now is the time to be expecting to hear Phaedra's side. Our knowledge enhances the questions of the chorus, since several of these queries in fact approach the real problem with their references to female sexuality, adultery, divine interference, Phaedra's Cretan heritage.[22] All these questions also guide our feelings in the direction they are to continue to go until the end of Phaedra's part, that is, in sympathy for her plight and admiration for her struggle. The assumption of the chorus is of total innocence on Phaedra's part. Our feelings for Phaedra may come as a surprise to us, for we expect her to be one of those wicked older women who seduce and destroy young innocent men with no thought of the consequences. Her innocence[23] is a brilliant innovation. Aphrodite has already told us that Phaedra is dying *eukleēs* and that she is dying in silence. This is not only a surprise but also a means of exciting our curiosity. When she is brought out by Nurse and other servants, not one of whom knows what is wrong (40), the scene is set for the silence to be broken. What makes us sympathize with Phaedra is at first our shared knowledge. We know with her what no one else knows. We have special knowledge too, for we know that she is the victim of a divine plot which has little to do with her, which is unconcerned with her feelings. But the Phaedra we come to know is more than Kupris' simple picture of her.

Phaedra's silence and Theseus' absence, like the old servant's suggestion that Hippolytus worship Aphrodite, offer us a false hope which plays against our knowledge and increases our expectancy. But Nurse, a surprise character, not one of the triad of the prologue, mentioned as necessary to Aphrodite's plans, who really has no plan of action at all, only a single principle that life for all its pain and bother must be pre-

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is overlooked by Phaedra; to Aphrodite he is merely an instrument. But here he is identified as a killer, but one who accepts responsibility for his actions (34-7). His role also emphasizes the cooperation of men and gods: Aphrodite's plan cannot work without the help of her victims. Euripides changes the chronology of the killing of the Pallantids and has Theseus accept exile so that he can put the members of the triangle together in Trozen, and perhaps so that he can put the present story into the context of the Athenian struggle for succession (Barrett ad loc.). The question of the right of succession does resurface (304-9, 1010vv.).

[21] References to Theseus are not abundant before his appearance, but are sufficient to remind us and the characters that his absence is only temporary (lines 10, 26, 34, 42-5, 151, 320, 420, 520, 590, 651, 658, 660-1, 690, 720, 778).

[22] Grube, 179-80; on the Cretan heritage, see Reckford, 319-328.

[23] Conacher, 27ff.

served at whatever sacrifice, keeps talking and wheedling until she gets what she wants, working on Phaedra's sense of duty and on her dynastic ambitions for her children, and then on her longing for glory (taking her cue from Phaedra's words), flattering her and begging at the same time and finally supplicating. This posture comes easily and frivolously to Nurse and yet is treated with all seriousness by Phaedra. And so it comes out: Phaedra admits (and refuses to admit) that she is in love with Hippolytus. Aphrodite's plan is edging toward fulfillment: one of the servants knows. And what a servant she is. Only through her can the knowledge be passed and Phaedra still remain *euklеēs*. Even Phaedra's *eukleia* is used against her: it is a crucial element in the passage of knowledge from Phaedra to Theseus. *Eukleia* is her motive in keeping silence, in telling, and in continuing to tell.

But with the naming of Hippolytus, Phaedra's revelation has only just begun. In what is like a second prologue or an anti-prologue, Phaedra introduces herself. Like Aphrodite, Phaedra tells of her plans and cogitations, and like Aphrodite she goes back to the beginning. The address of her speech is narrower (women of Trozen as opposed to the whole world addressed by the goddess); her view of life is more human. Like Aphrodite she is concerned with how she is viewed and treated by others; and like Aphrodite's her purpose is revelation (compare lines 9 and 391). But Phaedra's plan is the opposite of Aphrodite's: to keep silent (cf. 40) and (no doubt simultaneously) to conquer the *anoia* with *sōphrosunē*, and then to die. The list is consonant with Aphrodite's plans. But the rest of Phaedra's decisions would annihilate the goddess' purpose, for Phaedra wants to die without causing any further damage. It is Phaedra's second goal at which she has failed: she has not been able to conquer the *anoia* (note how she uses the words *Kuprin kratēsai* as a synonym for *anoian nikan*). Until a very few minutes ago she had been able to keep her first resolve. And only the day before yesterday did she put her last resolve (to die) into effect. We do not hear of her resolves until she has failed to keep that first, most crucial one (to hide her illness). Her third resolve has not failed. In it she wavers only briefly in the encounter with Nurse that follows this speech and ironically precipitates her death.

Our knowledge of Phaedra, gained through both Aphrodite's words and her own, makes us sympathize with her. Her failure to keep silent is not a vicious failure. She is anything but the typical older woman of folktale trying to seduce the younger man.[24] That alternative is rejected in her own 'great speech' when she denounces adulterous women, and again in her outraged reaction to Nurse's temptation speech. At the last

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[24] Lattimore, 5-7.

Nurse claims to have thought of a cure (509vv.). Her words are ambiguous. But it is clear beyond any doubt that Phaedra does not want Nurse to bring about the consummation of an affair with her husband's son (520). But Nurse is spreading information, which is the very heart of Aphrodite's plan (cf. 523-4). It will be brought into the light.

Phaedra's fear is realized. Hippolytus irrupts onto the stage with violence and ugly words. In a way, of course, he is justified: a morally repugnant suggestion has been made to him by the intimate servant of his step-mother. He does not stop to ask the right questions any more than Phaedra can bring herself to ask the right question of her Nurse (at 516). To ask the right questions is not to be tragic.

So we see his earlier rejection of Aphrodite transferred to the human level. But Aphrodite is little more than "a tourist with diplomatic immunity from the misery of the world."[25] His rejection does not touch her. We may even applaud him for refusing to toady to this destructive creature, at least on the personal level, for we must also recognize Kupris as an undeniable phenomenon. Not so when he treats Phaedra so high-handedly. It is the juxtaposition that makes him so repellent. We have just heard Phaedra. We have experienced her suffering. We have witnessed her struggle and temptation. The violence, the meanness, the excessiveness of this denunciation put Hippolytus (temporarily) beyond the pale. The man who was called *mega phronōn* by Aphrodite (6) is said by Phaedra to be *hupsēlos* (730). Phaedra's threat, on the other hand, to be *kakon* to another puts her very close to Aphrodite (725-31). If her opening words seemed like a new prologue to set the record straight, Phaedra's last spoken words are an echo of Aphrodite's final prophecy. To Aphrodite the person who was not to get in the way of actualization of the plan was Phaedra. Now Phaedra's plan not to be seen shamefully (720-1) depends upon the sacrifice of another life, this time, Hippolytus'. In all this Theseus is the forgotten man.

But Theseus' time comes. In a play dealing as this one does with knowledge, the arrival of a new and totally ignorant character must arouse interest. Theseus' ignorance separates him from us and from the chorus with whom we share knowledge of and involvement in what has happened. But we know that the matter is to be revealed to him. The last hope is cancelled when the chorus lies (804). No sooner has Theseus discovered for us how the innocent Hippolytus is implicated than he fulfills the last of Aphrodite's prophecies. The chorus, now knowing all that we know, voices our feelings; *apeuchou tauta* (891), answers our

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[25] Iris Murdoch's phrase in *An Accidental Man*.

despair. We know what Theseus does not know: these curses are not to be in vain.

Throughout the debate between father and son there exists a barrier of silence and ignorance—not only between the two actors, but between the audience and the actors—heightened by abstract talk about the ways of knowing. Each actor is isolated by ignorance of the other and of the facts, all of which we share with the accomplice chorus. Hippolytus comes close to understanding at times (e.g., 1034, 1091). And when he cries out to the house to witness for him (1074-5) he is directly experiencing Phaedra's anguish (cf. 418). His longing for another self to see him as his father cannot (1078-9) is a direct appeal to the audience. We see him where Phaedra was, the victim of false report, made to seem true. We hear him denounced by his father as a hypocrite. We hear his father ridicule the thing he holds most dear, his friendship with Artemis. Hippolytus might not be able to understand Phaedra's plight. He may not even see himself suffering what she suffered. But his experience of the kind of calumny she suffered is direct. There are other ways of knowing.[26] Hippolytus does not need to put his experience into words. We make the analogy between him and Phaedra, from the pattern of speeches, apology (Phaedra's) followed by denunciation (Hippolytus'), denunciation (Theseus') followed by apology (Hippolytus'); from the repeated words and sentiments in the two apologies, from the innocence of both of the charges.

The knowledge which the audience holds, gained from the prologue and from the ensuing scenes, is intimately connected to our sympathy for the characters, which in turn is determined by the knowledge or ignorance of the character in question. When Hippolytus leaves for dinner and the stables, he is a sympathetic character: we know that he is enjoying his last day, but he does not know. We are aware that he is offensive to Aphrodite, but what this means is still unclear. When he attacks all women and through them Phaedra herself he is anything but sympathetic, in spite of the extenuating factor that from his (only partly informed) point of view an unspeakable outrage has been committed. It is because we know Phaedra, know that she is his equal, that she is virtuous, though virtue comes harder to her and is dearly bought, that we know Hippolytus is committing an injustice far greater than his abstract misogyny. He is hurting a real person. His penultimate entrance, after so much has happened of which he is unaware, regains the sympathy he lost, but it is a knowing sympathy, for we are aware of his faults and we are aware of how he appears to his father. In all cases it is our knowledge

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[26] "Truth cannot...be incarnated in logos," Untersteiner, 141.

opposed to and aware of his ignorance that is a major factor in our feeling for him.

Not so in the case of Phaedra. Our interest in her from the first concerns the knowledge we share with her. Our fullest sympathy is extended when she explains so clearly and honestly what she knows and intends to do. But when she acts on her knowledge to destroy Hippolytus, she loses much of this fellow-feeling. When she claims ignorance (599) it is an indication of her despair and confusion. There is only one hope left, to die. But when later she adds to her plan (723) something which she hides from us, our fellow-feeling is thwarted. We have been party to all Phaedra's secrets, her passion and her intimate thought, the principles of her life and her love of honor. Her denial here undoes it all: we cannot feel with her in this unshared plan. Our knowledge of her knowledge both creates and eradicates sympathy. Phaedra knows that she cannot share this last plan.

Theseus hears of his son's disaster and he gloats, his gloating tempered by a tinge of loyalty to his own seed. His is not joyous boasting like Oedipus' near the end, on the edge of the most terrible truth, but a pitiful recognition. He recognizes his father and his son together (1169-72). This is what Kupris, the goddess of generation and family relationship, has wrought. The final revelation, what is proverbially the greatest joy for a father, the realization that his son is a good man, has become for Theseus the saddest truth of all.

That Theseus remain in ignorance is unacceptable. But why does Euripides use the god from the machine? Hippolytus has already—being unable to break his vow—failed to prove his innocence, nor is he an accurate witness. But it is not unknown for a chorus to break the promise of silence. The chorus has been present and understands as we do the agony of Phaedra, her trial and struggle and her failure. The chorus has been subjected to Hippolytus' tirade and has not faltered in sympathy for Phaedra. And the chorus knows that Hippolytus is innocent. But the chorus could not add anything we do not already know. We and the chorus are fellow witnesses: its position shows us our own, silent accomplices in the tragic event. But Artemis can inform Theseus with authority and she can tell us what we do not know. Too much sympathy for Phaedra would be out of place here: the visual replay *mutatis mutandis* of Phaedra's entrance, supported by servants, longing for death, may be enough. Along with this, Theseus' bending over or kneeling beside a second body of a loved one would remind us of Phaedra's death. At the end, Hippolytus is integrated into the family, perhaps against his will (cf. "we three," 1403 to which Artemis answers, "Yes, you *three.*"). Artemis, because she sees no fault in Hippolytus, can make the pain of knowing

all the more excruciating for Theseus. Artemis lets us know how it can come about that a man loved by one god can be destroyed by another (1328-30). The goddess cannot see the complicity of all the characters. Her telling leaves out Hippolytus, as if he had no part other than untouched victim of Phaedra's love. Artemis can blame Aphrodite, but what she says runs counter to our experience of the play: we have seen Phaedra determined to be pure of wrong-doing and yet willing to leave behind her a cruel lie; we have seen Theseus curse his son and gloat over his destruction; and we have seen Hippolytus boast of his purity and yet put the worst interpretation on others' actions, both in the abstract and in the particular instance. It is here, finally, more than anywhere else in the drama, in Artemis' survey of the plot, that Euripides involves the audience in the creation of the truth. We have seen the failure of every kind of evidence, from the homely truth of cliché to divine revelation. One goddess makes Hippolytus the guilty party and Phaedra and Theseus victims unwittingly involved; the other makes Hippolytus the innocent victim of Phaedra's desire and design and Theseus' overly hasty will, and all three the victims of Aphrodite. From these partial truths we must create a truth that includes both views. Divinities, being abstract, cannot admit contradiction. But we must recognize those contradictions if we are to know anything at all.

> οὐδ' εἰ γυναικῶν πᾶν κρεμασθείη γένος
> καὶ τὴν ἐν Ἴδῃ γραμμάτων πλήσειέ τις
> πεύκην, ἐπεί νιν ἐσθλὸν ὄντ' ἐπίσταμαι. (1252-1254)

The messenger introduces his statement of confidence in Hippolytus' goodness with a hyperbolic comment,[27] even if all the women in the world were to hang themselves and use up the forests of Mt. Ida for their writing materials, "I know that he is good." He undercuts one truth by another: when Phaedra was hanging herself we would not have used the word *esthlos* of Hippolytus, but more probably her word *hupsēlos* (730). But his reference to the letter recalls our ambiguous feelings for Phaedra. The messenger has no such ambiguous feelings. But Phaedra's final failure does not erase our knowledge of what she suffered, our knowledge that she was wrongfully judged by Hippolytus. We see what characters, whether offstage or in heaven, miss. We see them all as good people with honorable intentions and we see them act wrongfully. We know the *ēthos* of each character. We have been guided by the author to see each one with sympathy. How do we know? We know the same way the messenger knows that Hippolytus is a good man, because Euripides has written and directed our part too.

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[27] Dover, 194.

δάκνει σε, Θησεῦ, μῦθος;

Hippolytus 1313

AFTERWORD

THE TRAGEDY OF KNOWLEDGE[1]

Τὸ μὲν εἶναι ἀφανὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ δοκεῖν, τὸ δὲ δοκεῖν ἀσθενὲς μὴ τυχὸν τοῦ εἶναι. Gorgias, fr. 26

The phenomenal world is a world of change: this is the world of the human characters and the world of drama. Against this world is set a divine world of changelessness, of absolutes, of exclusions, which at first seems beautiful to Hippolytus (and to us), but by the end of his life he recognizes its terrible face and rejects it, as it rejects him in the end (1415, 1437-9). Our world of change is one in which there can be no fixed predicates. Of such a world Gorgias doubted whether there was anything of which one could say it *is*.[2] Hippolytus suffers the tragedy of change, when he realizes that his father believes the worst of him, when death removes him from his goddess. The physical contrast between his first and last entrances brings home most visually the tragedy of change.[3] Hippolytus is and is no more (cf. 1162-3).

Hippolytus recognizes too the tragedy of certainty, of changelessness. ἄραρεν ὡς ἔοικεν, "it is settled then" (1090). The saddest truth is that the characters had tried to fix their lives, to settle the future, to live under fixed conditions (459) all along. And they do manage to create a situation in which second thoughts are impossible, a world, in short, like that of the gods. Hippolytus does this more consistently than any other character: for him it is a lifelong practice; for the others a momentary decision. And the two goddesses encircle the action claiming that it was settled even before it started in a cosmic certainty, which will soon be repeated with new victims.

No word once spoken can be unsaid, not a prayer or vow, not an oath or curse, not a denunciation or admission, not a suggestion or rejection. This is the inexorable, universal, and tragic truth of the *Hippolytus*. There can be no hedge against this change, no hedge against knowing. Phaedra alone acts consciously knowing all the irreconcilable conflicts.[4] Her act is the choice of one good that will cancel out another, one truth at the expense of another. But her choice cannot change what is and what is to

[1] The phrase is borrowed from Untersteiner, 120; see also 141-62.
[2] Or taking *is* in its predicative rather than existential sense, *is anything*.
[3] Compare with this the messenger's speech in the *Medea*.
[4] See Untersteiner, 161.

be known. She is careful, but not careful enough. She can easily silence Hippolytus, Nurse, and the chorus, but to eradicate the knowledge she would have to eliminate all knowers, present and potential, all the viewers of time's mirror. Half of the knowledge she fears she annuls by her death: she will not have to know what is known. But as long as there are subjects to know, she cannot prevent their knowing.

We cannot refuse to know. No more than we can choose what is to be known. We must know the awful truth, all of it, in all its multiplicity and contradiction, in all its ambiguity and even deceptiveness. To reject one truth, to say for example that Hippolytus is *esthlos* and omit that he is *hupsēlos* is to lie with the chorus when they say *tosouton ismen* (804). But still more false is it to know him as *kakos* and fail to see his goodness, innocence, and pain.

> Αἴσθοιτο δ' ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀτιμάζει πατὴρ
> ἤτοι θανόντας ἢ φάος δεδορκότας. (1192-3)

Hippolytus prays that his father will know that he wronged him. It is a kinder wish than Phaedra's was for Hippolytus. The knowledge is painful, almost beyond enduring for the father. Knowing his son, even more than killing his son, is tragic for Theseus. But συγγνώμη depends on this knowledge. Knowing is tragic, but without it the characters are not fully human.

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